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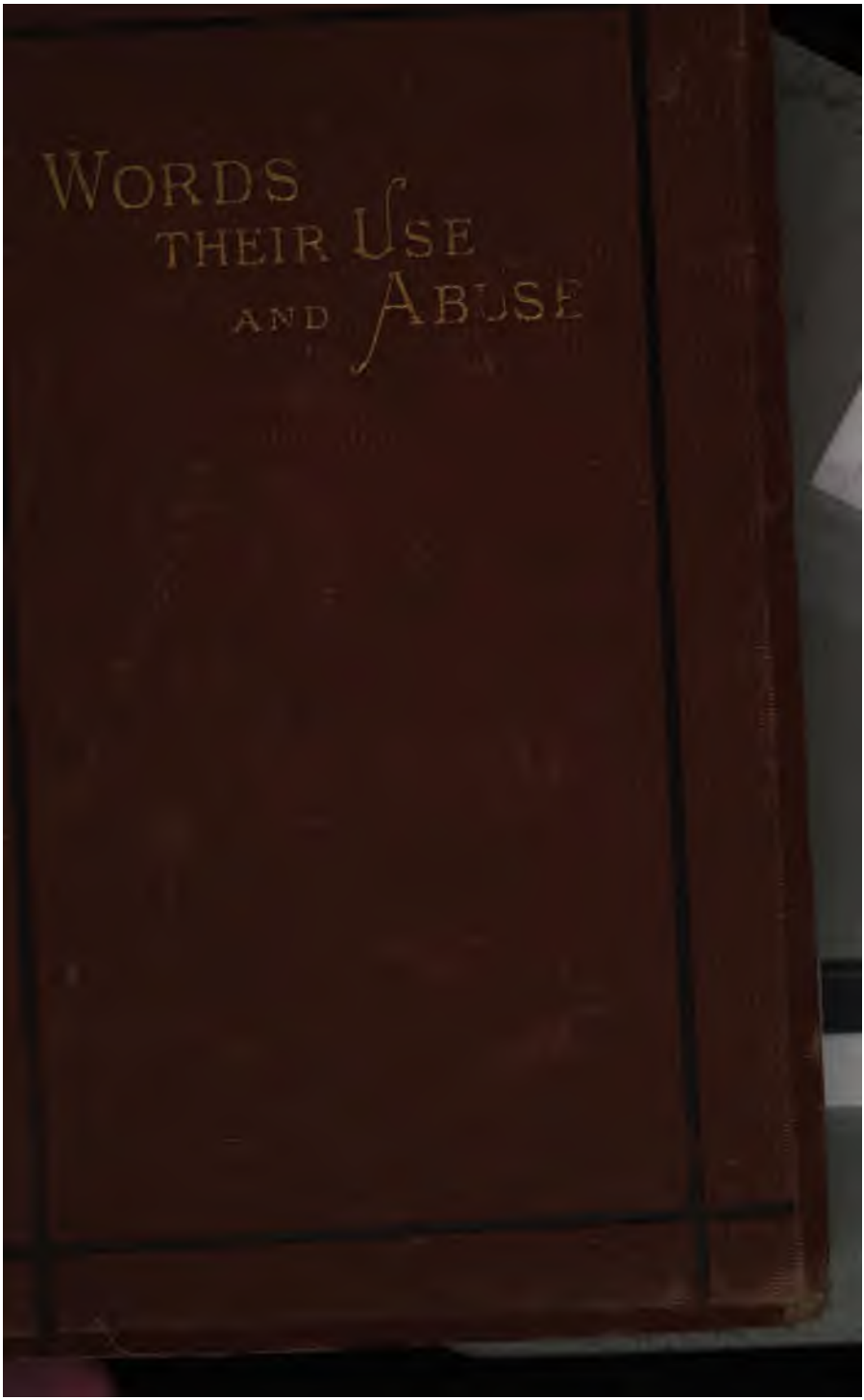
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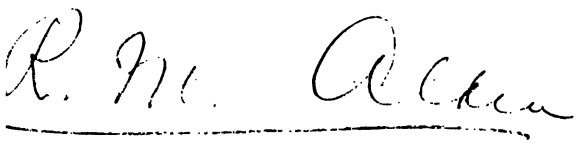

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AUTHOR OF "GETTING ON IN THE WORLD," AND "THE GREAT CONVERSERS, AND OTHER ESSAYS."

Die Sprache ist nichts anderes als der in die Erscheinung tretende Gedanke und beide sind innerlich nur eins und dasselbe.—BECKER.

NINTH THOUSAND.

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TO

MARTIN B. ANDERSON, LL.D.

PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER,

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED

WITH THE SINCERE REGARDS OF

THE AUTHOR.

Words are lighter than the cloud foam
  Of the restless ocean spray;
Vainer than the trembling shadow
  That the next hour steals away;
By the fall of summer rain-drops
  Is the air as deeply stirred;
And the rose leaf that we tread on
  Will outlive a word.

Yet on the dull silence breaking
  With a lightning flash, a word,
Bearing endless desolation
  On its blighting wings, I heard.
Earth can forge no keener weapon,
  Dealing surer death and pain,
And the cruel echo answered
  Through long years again.

I have known one word hang star-like
  O'er a dreary waste of years,
And it only shone the brighter
  Looked at through a mist of tears.
While a weary wanderer gathered
  Hope and heart on life's dark way.
By its faithful promise shining
  Clearer day by day.

I have known a spirit calmer
  Then the calmest lake, and clear
As the heavens that gazed upon it,
  With no wave of hope or fear;
But a storm had swept across it,
  And its deepest depths were stirred,
Never, never more to slumber.
  Only by a word.

ADELAIDE A. PROCTER.

Language and thought are inseparable. Words without thought are dead sounds; thoughts without words are nothing. To think is to speak low; to speak is to think aloud. The word is the thought incarnate.—MAX MÜLLER.

A winged word hath struck ineradically in a million hearts, and envenomed every hour throughout their hard pulsation. On a winged word hath hung the destiny of nations. On a winged word hath human wisdom been willing to cast the immortal soul, and to leave it dependent for all its future happiness.—W. S. LANDOR.

Words are things; and a small drop of ink, falling like dew upon a thought, produces that which makes thousand, perhaps millions, think.—BYRON.

A dead language is full of all monumental remembrances of the people who spoke it. Their swords and their shields are in it; their faces are pictured on its walls; and their very voices ring still through its recesses.—B. W. DWIGHT.

Every sentence of the great writer is like an autograph. . . If Milton had endorsed a bill of exchange with half-a-dozen blank verse lines, it would be as good as his name, and would be accepted as good evidence in court.—ALEXANDER SMITH.

If there be a human talent, let it get into the tongue, and make melody with that organ. The talent that can say nothing for itself, what is it? Nothing; or a thing that can do mere drudgeries, and at best make money by railways.—CARLYLE.

Human language may be polite and powerless in itself, uplifted with difficulty into expression by the high thoughts it utters, or it may in itself become so saturated with warm life and delicious association that every sentence shall palpitate and thrill with the mere fascination of the syllables.—T. W. HIGGINSON.

Six little words do claim me every day,
Shall, *must* and *can*, with *will* and *ought* and *may*.
SHALL is the law within inscribed by heaven,
The goal to which I by myself am driven.
MUST is the bound not to be overpast,
Where by the world and nature I'm held fast.
CAN is the measure of my personal dower
Of deed and art, science and practised power.
WILL is my noblest crown, my brightest, best,
Freedom's my own seal upon my soul imprest;
OUGHT the inscription on the seal set fair
On Freedom's open door, a bolt 'tis there.
And lastly, MAY, 'mong many courses mixed,
The vaguely possible by the moment fixed.
SHALL, MUST and CAN, with WILL and OUGHT and MAY,
These are the six that claim me every day.
Only when God doth teach, do I know what each day,
I shall, I must, I can, I will, I ought, I may.

Translated from the German for the N. Y. School Journal.

PREFACE.

THE origin of this book is as follows: — Some twenty years ago, the author, having considerable leisure, wrote a lecture on "Words,— their Significance, Use and Abuse," which he delivered before a number of Literary Societies and Lecture Associations. Being very much interested in the subject, he continued from time to time to make notes of his thoughts and readings upon it, till at length the lecture grew into a volume.

The author is well aware that in his criticisms on the misuses and abuses of words, he has exposed himself to criticism; and it may be that he has been guilty of some of the very sins which he has condemned. If so, he sins in good company, since nearly all of his predecessors, who have written on the same theme, have been found guilty of a similar inconsistency, from Lindley Murray down to Dean Alford, Moon, Marsh, and Fowler. If the public is to hear no philological sermons till the preachers are faultless, it will have to wait forever. "The only impeccable authors," says Hazlitt, "are those that never wrote." Any just, well-meant criticism, however severe, the author will

gratefully welcome; to that which springs from an instinctive love of fault-finding, he is apt to be thick-skinned. In the words of Erasmus: "Nos ad utrumque juxta parati sumus, ut vel rationem reddamus, si quid rectè monuimus, vel ingenuè confiteamur errorem, sicubi lapsi deprehendimur."

It is hardly necessary to add that the work is designed for popular reading, rather than for scholars. How much the author is indebted to others, he cannot say. He has been traveling, in his own way, over old and well-worn ground, and has picked up his materials freely from all the sources within his reach. *Non nova, sed nové*, has been his aim; he regrets that he has not accomplished it more to his satisfaction. The world, it has been truly said, does not need new thoughts so much as it needs that old thoughts be recast. There are some writers, however, to whom he has been particularly indebted; and therefore a list of their names, with the books consulted, has been appended at the end of the volume.

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WORDS; THEIR USE AND ABUSE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORDS.

"Speech is morning to the mind;
It spreads the beauteous images abroad,
Which else lie dark and buried in the soul."

La parole, cette main de l'esprit.—CHARRON.

Syllables govern the world.—COKE.

TO the thoughtful man, who has reflected on the common operations of life, which, but for their commonness, would be deemed full of marvel, few things are more wonderful than the origin, structure, history and significance of words. The tongue is the glory of man; for though animals have memory, will and intellect, yet language, which gives us a duplicate and multipliable existence,—enabling mind to communicate with mind,—is the Rubicon which they never have dared to cross. The dog barks as it barked at the creation, and the crow of the cock is the same to-day as when it startled the ear of repentant Peter. The song of the lark and the howl of the leopard have continued as unchangeable as the concentric circles of the spider and the waxen hexagon of the bee; and even the stoutest champion of the ourang-outang theory of man's origin will admit that no process of natu-

ral selection has yet distilled significant words out of the cries of beasts or the notes of birds. Speech is a divine gift. It is the last seal of dignity stamped by God upon His intelligent offspring, and proves, more conclusively than his upright form, or his looks "commercing with the skies," that he was made in the image of God. Without this crowning gift to man, even reason would have been comparatively valueless; for he would have felt himself to be imprisoned even when at large, solitary in the midst of a crowd; and the society of the wisest of his race would have been as uninstructive as that of barbarians and savages. The rude tongue of a Patagonian or Australian is full of wonders to the philosopher; but as we ascend in the scale of being from the uncouth sounds which express the desires of a savage to the lofty periods of a Cicero or a Chatham, the power of words expands until it attains to regions far above the utmost range of our capacity. It designates, as Novalis has said, God with three letters, and the infinite with as many syllables, though the ideas conveyed by these words are immeasurably beyond the utmost grasp of man. In every relation of life, at every moment of our active being, in ever' thing we think or do, it is on the meaning and inflecti(of a *word* that the direction of our thoughts, and the e pression of our will, turn. The soundness of our reasc ings, the clearness of our belief and of our judgm the influence we exert upon others, and the mann which we are impressed by our fellow-men,— all (upon a knowledge of the value of words. It is guage that the treasures of human knowledge. coveries of Science, and the achievements of chiefly preserved; it is language that furnish

with the airy vehicle for his most delicate fancies, the orator with the elements of his electrifying eloquence, the savant with the record of his classification, the metaphysician with the means of his sharp distinction, the statesman with the drapery of his vast design, and the philosopher with the earthly instrument of his heaven-reaching induction.

"Words," said the fierce Mirabeau, in reply to an opponent in the National Assembly, "are *things;*" and truly they were such when *he* thundered them forth from the Tribune, full of life, meaning and power. Words are always things, when coming from the lips of a master-spirit, and instinct with his own individuality. Especially is this true of so impassioned orators as Mirabeau, who have thoughts impatient for words, not words starving for thoughts, and who but give utterance to the spirit breathed by the whole Third Estate of a nation. Their words are not merely things, but *living* things, endowed with power not only to communicate ideas, but to convey, as by spiritual conductors, the shock and thrill which attended their birth. Look at the "winged words" of old Homer, into which he breathed the breath of his own spiritual life,— how long have they kept on the wing! For twenty-five or thirty centuries they have maintained their flight across gulfs of time in which empires have suffered shipwreck and the languages of common life have sunk into oblivion; and they are still full of the life-blood of immortal youth.

"How forcible," says Job, "are right words!" "A word fitly spoken," says Solomon, "is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Few persons have duly estimated the power of words. In anatomical museums one will sometimes see the analysis of a man,— that is, the mere chem-

ical constituents, so much lime, so much albumen, so much phosphorus, etc. These dead substances fail not more utterly in representing a living man, with his mental and moral force, than do the long rows of words in the lexicon of exhibiting the power with which, as signs of ideas, they may be endowed. Language has been truly pronounced the armory of the human mind, which contains at once the trophies of its past and the weapons of its future conquests. Look at a Webster or a Calhoun, when his mighty enginery of thought is in full operation; how his words tell upon his adversary, battering down the intrenchments of sophistry like shot from heavy ordnance! Cannon-shot are very harmless things when piled up for show; so are words when tiered up in the pages of a dictionary, with no mind to select and send them home to the mark. But let them receive the vitalizing touch of genius, and how they leap with life; with what tremendous energy are they endowed! When the little Corsican bombarded Cadiz at the distance of five miles, it was deemed the very triumph of engineering; but what was this paltry range to that of words, which bombard the ages yet to come? "Scholars," says Sir Thomas Browne, "are men of peace. They carry no arms, but their tongues are sharper than Actus his razors; their pens carry further and make a louder report than thunder. I had rather stand the shock of a basalisco than the fury of a merciless pen."

The words which a man of genius selects are as much his own as his thoughts. They are not the dress, but the incarnation, of his thought, as the body contains the soul. Analyze a speech by either of the great orators we have just named, and a critical study will satisfy you that the crushing force of his arguments lies not less in the nicety

and skill with which the words are chosen, than in the granite-like strength of thought. Attempt to substitute other words for those that are used, and you will find that the latter are part and parcel of the author's mind and conception; that every word is accommodated with marvellous exactness to all the sinuosities of the thought; that not the least of them can be changed without marring the completeness and beauty of the author's idea. If any other words can be used than those which a writer does use, he is a bungling rhetorician, and skims only the surface of his theme. True as this is of the best prose, it is doubly true of the best poetry; it is a linked strain throughout. It has been said by one who was himself a consummate master of language, that if, in the recollection of any passage of Shakespeare, a word shall escape your memory, you may hunt through the forty thousand words in the language, and not one shall fit the vacant place but that which the poet put there. Though he uses only the simplest and homeliest terms, yet "you might as well think," says Coleridge, "of pushing a brick out of a wall with your forefinger, as attempt to remove a word out of any of the finished passages of Shakespeare." Who needs to be told how much the wizard sorcery of Milton depends on the words he uses? It is not in what he directly tells us that his spell lies, but in the immense suggestiveness of his verse.

In Homer, it has been justly said, there are no hidden meanings, no deeps of thought into which the soul descends for lingering contemplation; no words which are key-notes, awakening the spirit's melodies,—

> "Untwisting all the links that tie
> The hidden soul of harmony."

But here is the realm of Milton's mastery. He electrifies the mind through conductors. His words, as Macaulay declares, are charmed. Their meaning bears no proportion to their effect. "No sooner are they pronounced, than the past is present and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence, substitute one synonyme for another, and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power; and he who should then hope to conjure with it would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying 'Open Wheat,' 'Open Barley,' to the door which obeyed no sound but 'Open Sesame.'"

The force and significance which Milton can infuse into the simplest word are strikingly shown in his description of the largest of land animals, in "Paradise Lost." In a single line the unwieldy monster is so represented as coming from the ground, that we almost involuntarily start aside from fear of being crushed by the living mass:—

> "Behemoth, the biggest born of earth, upheaved
> His vastness."

It is this necromantic power over language,—this skill in striking "the electric chain with which we are darkly bound," till its vibrations thrill along the chords of the heart, and its echoes ring in all the secret chambers of the soul,—which blinds us to the absurdities of "Paradise Lost." While following this mighty magician of language through

> —— "many a winding bout
> Of linked sweetness long drawn out,"

we overlook the incongruity with which he makes angels fight with "villainous saltpetre" and divinities talk Cal-

vinism, puts the subtleties of Greek syntax into the mouth of Eve, and exhibits the Omnipotent Father arguing like a school divine. As with Milton, so with his great predecessor, Dante. Wondrous as is his power of creating pictures in a few lines, he owes it mainly to the directness, simplicity, and intensity of his language. In him "the invisible becomes visible; darkness becomes palpable; silence describes a character; a word acts as a flash of lightning, which displays some gloomy neighborhood where a tower is standing, with dreadful faces at the window."

The difference in the use of words by different writers is as great as that in the use of paints by great and poor artists; and there is as great a difference in the effect upon the understanding and the sensibilities of their readers. Who that is familiar with Bacon's writings can ever fail to recognize one of his sentences, so dense with pith, and going to the mark as if from a gun? In him, it has been remarked, language was always the flexible and obedient instrument of the thought; not, as in the productions of a lower order of mind, its rebellious and recalcitrant slave. "All authors below the highest seem to use the mighty gift of expression with a certain secret timidity, lest the lever should prove too ponderous for the hand that essays to wield it; or rather, they resemble the rash student in the old legend, who was overmastered by the demons which he had unguardedly provoked." Emerson, in speaking of the intense vitality of Montaigne's words, says that if you cut them, they would bleed. Joubert, in revealing the secret of Rousseau's charm, says: "He imparted, if I may so speak, *bowels of feeling* to the words he used (*donna des entrailles à tous les mots*), and poured into them such a charm, sweetness so penetrating, energy so puissant, that

his writings have an effect upon the soul something like that of those illicit pleasures which steal away our taste and intoxicate our reason."

How much is the magic of Tennyson's verse due to "the fitting of aptest words to things," which we find on every page of his poetry! He has not only the vision, but the faculty divine, and no secret of his art is hid from him. Foot and pause, rhyme and rhythm, alliteration; subtle, penetrative words that touch the very quick of the truth; cunning words that have a spell in them for the memory and the imagination; old words, with their weird influence,

"Bright through the rubbish of some hundred years,"

and words used for the occasion in their primary sense, are all his ministers, and obedient to his will. An American writer, Mr. E. C. Stedman, in speaking of Swinburne's marvellous gift of melody, asks: "Who taught him all the hidden springs of melody? He was born a tamer of words, a subduer of this most stubborn, yet most copious of the literary tongues. In his poetry we discover qualities we did not know were in the language — a softness that seemed Italian, a rugged strength we thought was German, a blithe and debonair lightness we despaired of capturing from the French. He has added a score of new stops and pedals to the instrument. He has introduced, partly from other tongues, stanzaic forms, measures and effects untried before, and has brought out the swiftness and force of metres like the anapestic, carrying each to perfection at a single trial. Words in his hands are like the ivory balls of a juggler, and all words seem to be in his hands."

Words, with such men, are "nimble and airy servitors,"

not masters, and from the exquisite skill with which t
are chosen, and the firmness with which they are l
together, are sometimes "half battles, stronger than n
men's deeds." What is the secret of the weird-like po
of De Quincey? Is it not that, of all late English writers
has the most imperial dominion over the resources of
pression,— that he has weighed, as in a hair-balance,
precise significance of every word he uses; that he
conquered so completely the stubbornness of our verna
lar as to render it a willing slave to all the whims
caprices, the ever-shifting, kaleidoscopic variations of
thought? Turn to whatever page you will of his w
ings, and it is not the thorough grasp of his subject,
enormous erudition, the extraordinary breadth and pie
ing acuteness of intellect which he displays, that ex
your greatest surprise; but you feel that here is a n
who has gauged the potentiality of every word he us
who has analyzed the simples of his every compou
phrase. In his hands our stiff Saxon language becor
almost as ductile as the Greek. Ideas that seem to d
expression,— ideas so subtile, or so vague and shifti
that most thinkers find it difficult to contemplate th
at all,— are conveyed on his page with a nicety, a felic
of phrase, that might almost provoke the envy of Sha
peare. In the hands of a great sculptor, marble a
bronze become as soft and elastic as living flesh, and
unlike this is the dominion which the great writers p
sess over language. In their verse our rugged but pi
and expressive English breathes all sounds, all melodi

"And now 'tis like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute,
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute."

The superiority of the writers of the seventeenth century to those of our own day is due not less to their choice and collocation of words than to their weight of thought. There was no writing public nor reading populace in that age; the writers were few and intellectual, and they addressed themselves to learned, or, at least, to studious and thoughtful readers. "The structure of their language," says Henry Taylor, "is itself an evidence that they counted upon another frame of mind, and a different pace and speed in reading, from that which can alone be looked to by the writers of these days. Their books were not written to be snatched up, run through, talked over, and forgotten; and their diction, therefore, was not such as lent wings to haste and impatience, making everything so clear that he who ran or flew might read. Rather was it so constructed as to detain the reader over what was pregnant and profound, and compel him to that brooding and prolific posture of mind by which, if he had wings, they might help him to some more genial and profitable employment than that of running like an ostrich through a desert. And hence those characteristics of diction by which these writers are made more fit than those who have followed them to train the ear and utter ance of a poet. For if we look at the long-suspend sentences of those days, with all their convolutions intertextures,— the many parts waiting for the ulti wholeness, — we shall perceive that without disti movement and rhythmical significance of a ver order, it would be impossible that they could be in any sort of clearness. One of these writers' is often in itself a work of art, having its str antistrophes, its winding changes and recalls,

the reader, though conscious of plural voices and running divisions of thought, is not, however, permitted to dissociate them from their mutual concert and dependency, but required, on the contrary, to give them entrance into his mind, opening it wide enough for the purpose, as one compacted and harmonious fabric. Sentences thus elaborately constructed, and complex, though musical, are not easy to a remiss reader, but they are clear and delightful to an intent reader."

Few persons are aware how much knowledge is sometimes necessary to give the etymology and definition of a word. It is easy to define words, as certain persons satirized by Pascal have defined *light:* "A luminary movement of luminous bodies"; or as a Western judge once defined *murder* to a jury: "Murder, gentlemen, is when a man is murderously killed. It is the *murdering* that constitutes murder in the eye of the law. Murder, in short, is — murder." We have all smiled at Johnson's definition of *network:* "Network — anything reticulated or decussed at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections." Many of the definitions in our dictionaries remind one of Bardolph's attempt to analyze the term *accommodation:* "Accommodation,— that is, when a man is, as they say, accommodated; or when a man is being whereby he may be thought to be accommodated, which is an excellent thing." *Brimstone,* for example, the lexicographer defines by telling us that it is *sulphur;* and then rewards us for the trouble we have had in turning to *sulphur,* by telling us that it is *brimstone.* The eccentric Davy Crockett, whose exterior roughness veiled a great deal of mother wit, happily characterized this whole tribe of lexicographers by a remark he once made to a Western

member of Congress. When the latter, in a speech on a bill for increasing the number of hospitals, wearied his hearers by incessant repetition,—"Sit down," whispered Crockett, "you are coming out of the same hole you went in at." There is a mythical story that the forty members of the French Academy once undertook to define the word *crab*, and hit upon this, which they deemed quite satisfactory: "Crab,—a small red fish, which walks backward." "Perfect, gentlemen," said Cuvier, when interrogated touching the correctness of the definition; "perfect,—only I will make one small observation in natural history. The crab is *not* a fish, it is *not* red, and it does *not* walk backward. With these exceptions, your definition is admirable." Too many easily-made definitions are liable to similar damaging exceptions.

The truth is, no word can be truly defined until the exact idea is understood, in all its relations, which the word is designed to represent. Let a man undertake to define the word "alkali" or "acid," for instance, and he will have to encounter some pretty hard problems in chemistry. Lavoisier, the author of the terminology of modern chemistry, tells us that when he undertook to form a nomenclature of that science, and while he proposed to himsel nothing more than to improve the chemical language, hi work transformed itself by degrees, and without his beir able to prevent it, into a treatise upon the elements chemistry. A similar experience was that of Sar Bailey, who held a derivative opinion in favor of Berk "Theory of Vision"; but having, in the course of osophical discussion, occasion to explain it, he found tempting to state *in his own language* the grounds o it rested, that they no longer appeared to him to be

and conclusive as he had fancied them to be. He determined, therefore, to make them the subject of a patient and dispassionate examination; and the result was a clear conviction of the erroneousness of Berkeley's theory, the philosophical grounds for which conviction he has so ably and luminously set forth in his book on the subject. The truth is, accurate definitions of the terms of any science can only follow accurate and sharply-defined notions of the science itself. Try to define the words *matter, substance, idea, will, cause, conscience, virtue, right*, and you will soon ascertain whether you have grappled with the grand problems or only skimmed the superficies of metaphysics and ethics.

Let no one, then, underrate the importance of the study of words. Daniel Webster was often seen absorbed in the study of an English Dictionary. Lord Chatham read the folio dictionary of Bailey twice through, examining each word attentively, dwelling on its peculiar import and modes of construction, and thus endeavoring to bring the whole range of our language completely under his control. One of the most distinguished American authors is said to be in the habit of reading the dictionary through about once a year. His choice of fresh and forceful terms has provoked at times the charge of pedantry; but, in fact, he has but fearlessly used the wealth of the language that lies buried in the pages of Noah Webster. It is only by thus working in the mines of language that one can fill his storehouses of expression, so as to be above the necessity of using cheap and common words, or even using these with no subtle discrimination of their meanings. Rufus Choate once said to one of his students: "You don't want a diction gathered from the newspapers, caught from the air, common and unsuggestive: but you want

one whose every word is full-freighted with suggestion and association, with beauty and power." The leading languages of the world are full of such words, "opulent, microcosmic, in which histories are imaged, which record civilizations. Others recall to us great passages of eloquence, or of noble poetry, and bring in their train the whole splendor of such passages, when they are uttered."

Mr. Disraeli says of Canning, that he had at command the largest possible number of terms, both "rich and rare,"— words most vivid and effective,— really spirit-stirring words; for words there are, as every poet knows, whose sound is an echo to the sense, — words which, while by their literal meaning they convey an idea to the mind, have also a sound and association which are like music to the ear, and a picture to the eye,— vivid, graphic, and picturesque words that make you almost see the thing described. It is said of Keats, that when reading Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton, he became a critic of their thoughts, their words, their rhymes, and their cadences. He brooded over fine phrases like a lover; and often, when he met a quaint or delicious word in the course of his reading, he would take pains to make it his own by using it, as speedily as possible, in some poem he was writing. Upon expressions like "the sea-shouldering whale" of Spenser, he would dwell with an ecstasy of delight.

The question has been often discussed whether, if man were deprived of articulate speech, he would still be able to think. The example of the deaf and dumb, who evidently think, not by associations of sound, but of touch, — using combinations of finger-speech, instead of words, as the symbols of their thought,— appears to show that he might find an efficient substitute for his present means

of reflection. The telegraph and railway signals, are, in fact, new modes of speech, which are quickly familiarized by practice. The engine driver shuts off the steam at the warning signal, without thinking of the words to which it is equivalent; a particular signal becomes associated with a particular act, and the interposition of words becomes useless. It is well known that persons skilled in gesticulation can communicate by it a long series of facts and even complicated trains of thought. Roscius, the Roman actor, claimed that he could express a sentiment in a greater variety of ways by significant gestures than Cicero could by language. During the reign of Augustus, both tragedies and comedies were acted, with powerful effect, by pantomime alone. When the Megarians wanted help from the Spartans, and threw down an empty meal-bag before the assembly, declaring that "it lacked meal," these verbal economists said that "the mention of the sack was superfluous." When the Scythian ambassadors wished to convince Darius of the hopelessness of invading their country, they made no long harangue, but argued with far more cogency by merely bringing him a bird, a mouse, a frog, and two arrows, to imply that unless he could soar like a bird, burrow like a mouse, and hide in the marshes like a frog, he would never be able to escape their shafts.

Facts like these tend to show that man might still have been, as the root of the word "man" implies in Sanskrit, "a thinking being," though he had never been a "speech-dividing" being; but, it is evident that his range of thought would have been exceedingly narrow, and that his mightiest triumphs over nature would have

been impossible. While it may be true, as Tennyson says, that

> "Thought leapt out to wed with thought,
> Ere thought could wed itself to speech,"

yet there is an intimate relation between "ratio" and "oratio," and it may be doubted whether, without *some* signs, verbal or of another sort, thought, except of the simplest kind, would not have been beyond man's power. Long use has so familiarized us with language, we employ it so readily, and without conscious effort, that we are apt to regard it as a matter of course, and become blind to its mystery and deep significance. We rarely think of the long and changeful history through which each word we utter has passed,—of the many changes in form and changes in signification it has undergone,—and of the time and toil spent in its invention and elaboration by successive generations of thinkers and speakers. Still less do we think how different man's history would have been, how comparatively useless would have been all his other endowments, had God not given him the faculties "which, out of the shrieks of birds in the forest, the roar of beasts, the murmur of rushing waters, the sighing of the wind, and his own impulsive ejaculations, have constructed the great instrument that Demosthenes, and Shakspeare, and Massillon wielded, the instrument by which the laws of the universe are unfolded, and the subtle workings of the human heart brought to light." Language is not only a means of communication between man and man, but it has other functions hardly less important. It is only by its aid that we are able to analyze our complex impressions, to preserve the results of the analysis, and to abbreviate the processes of thought.

Were we content with the bare reception of visual impressions, we could to some extent dispense with words; but as the mind does not receive its impressions passively, but reflects upon them, decomposes them into their parts, and compares them with notions already stored up, it becomes necessary to give to each of these elements a name. By virtue of these names we are able to keep them apart in the mind, and to recall them with precision and facility, just as the chemist by the labels on his jars, or the gardener by those on his flower-pots, is enabled to identify the substances these vessels contain.* Thus reflections which when past might have been dissipated forever, are by their connection with language brought always within reach. Who can estimate the amount of investigation and thought which are represented by such words as *gravitation, chemical affinity, atomic weight, capital, inverse proportion, polarity,* and *inertia,*— words which are each the quintessence and final result of an infinite number of anterior mental processes, and which may be compared to the paper money or bills of exchange by which the world's wealth may be inclosed in envelopes and sent swiftly to the farthest centres of commerce? Who can estimate the inconvenience that would result, and the degree in which mental activity would be arrested, were we compelled to do without these comprehensive words which epitomize theories, sum up the labors of the past, and facilitate and abridge future mental processes? The effect, as Archbishop Trench has observed, would be to restrict all scientific discovery as effectually as commerce and exchange would be restricted, if all transactions had to be carried on with iron or copper as the sole medium of mercantile intercourse.

* "Outline of the Laws of Thought," by William Thomson, D.D., p. 52.

Language has thus an educational value, for in learning words we are learning to discriminate things. "As the distinctions between the relations of objects grow more numerous, involved, and subtle, it becomes more analytic, to be able to express them; and, inversely, those who are born to be the heirs of a highly analytic language, must needs learn to *think up* to it, to observe and distinguish all the relations of objects, for which they find the expressions already formed; so that we have an instructor for the thinking powers in that speech which we are apt to deem no more than their handmaid and minister." No two things, indeed, are more closely connected than poverty of language and poverty of thought. Language is, on one side, as truly the limit and restraint of thought, as on the other that which feeds and sustains it. When an illiterate person sits down to write, his fund of words being small, the paucity of his thoughts is sure to correspond to it. Though he may have made the circuit of the globe, and gazed on the main wonders of Nature and of Art, yet he has hardly more to write to his friends at home than the old pleonastic phrases, "I am well, and I hope you are well, and enjoying the same blessing." In bridging the chasm between such a man and one of high culture, the acquisition of words plays as important a part as the acquisition of ideas.

It has been justly said that no man can learn from or communicate to another more than the words they are familiar with either express or can be made to express. The deep degradation of the savage is due as much to the brutal poverty of his language as to other causes. Hence the knowledge of words is not an elegant accomplishment only, not a luxury, but a positive necessity of the civilized

and cultivated man. It is necessary not only to him who would express himself, but to him who would *think*, with precision and effect. There is, indeed, no higher proof of thorough and accurate culture than the fact that a writer, instead of employing words loosely and at hap-hazard, chooses only those which are the exact vesture of his thought. As he only can be called a well-dressed man whose clothes exactly fit him, being neither small and shrunken, nor loose and baggy, so it is the first characteristic of a good style that the words fit close to the ideas. They will be neither too big here, hanging like a giant's robe on the limbs of a dwarf, nor too small there, like a boy's garments into which a man has painfully squeezed himself; but will be the exact correspondents and perfect exponents of his thought. Between the most synonymous words a careful writer will have a choice; for, strictly speaking, there are no synonyms in a language, the most closely resembling and apparently equivalent terms having some nice shade of distinction,—a fine illustration of which is found in Ben Jonson's line, "Men may *securely* sin, but *safely* never"; and again, in the reply with which Sydney Smith used to meet the cant about popular education in England: "Pooh, pooh! it is the worst *educated* country in the world, I grant you; but it is the best *instructed*." William Pitt was a remarkable example of this precision of style. Fox said of him: "Though I am myself never at a loss for a word, Pitt not only has *a* word, but *the* word,—the very word,—to express his meaning." Robert Hall chose his words with a still more fastidious nicety, and he gave as one reason for his writing so little, that he could so rarely approach the realization of his own *beau-idéal* of a perfect style. It is related of him that, when he was cor-

recting the proofs of his sermon on "Modern Infidelity," on coming to the famous passage, "Eternal God, on what are thine enemies intent? What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of Heaven must not penetrate?"— he exclaimed to his friend, Dr. Gregory: "*Penetrate!* did I say *penetrate,* sir, when I preached it?" "Yes." "Do you think, sir, I may venture to alter it? for no man who considers the force of the English language would use a word of three syllables there but from absolute necessity. For *penetrate* put *pierce: pierce* is the word, sir, and the only word, to be used there."

John Foster was a yet more striking example of this conscientiousness and severity in discriminating words. Never, perhaps, was there a writer the electric action of whose mind, telegraphing with all nature's works, was so in contrast with its action in writing. Here it was almost painfully slow, like the expression of some costly oil, drop by drop. He would spend whole days on a few short sentences, passing each word under his concentrated scrutiny, so that each, challenged and examined, took its place in the structure like an inspected soldier in the ranks. When Chalmers, after a visit to London, was asked what Foster was about, he replied: "Hard at it, at the rate of a line a week." Read a page of the essay on "Decision of Character," and you will feel that this was scarcely an exaggeration,— that he stood by the ringing anvil till every word was forged into a bolt. Few persons know how hard easy writing is. Who that reads the light, sparkling verse of Thomas Moore, dreams of the mental pangs, the long and anxious thought, which a single word often cost him! Irving tells us that he was

once riding with the Irish poet in the streets of Paris, when the hackney-coach went suddenly into a deep rut, out of which it came with such a jolt as to send their pates bump against the roof. "By Jove, *I've got it!*" cried Moore, clapping his hands with great glee. "Got what?" said Irving. "Why," said the poet, "that *word* I've been hunting for six weeks, to complete my last song. That rascally driver has jolted it out of me."

The ancient writers and speakers were even more nice and fastidious than the moderns, in their choice and arrangement of words. Virgil, after having spent eleven years in the composition of the Æneid, intended to devote three years to its revision; but, being prevented by his last sickness from giving it the finishing touches which his exquisite judgment deemed necessary, he directed his friends to burn it. The great orator of Athens, to form his style, transcribed Thucydides again and again. He insisted that it was not enough that the orator, in order to prepare for delivery in public, should write down his thoughts,—he must, as it were, *sculpture* them in brass. He must not content himself with that loose use of language which characterizes a thoughtless fluency, but his words must have a precise and exact look, like newly-minted coin, with sharply-cut edges and devices. That Demosthenes himself "recked his own rede" in this matter we have abundant proof in almost every page of his great speeches. In his masterpieces we are introduced to mysteries of prose composition of which the moderns know nothing. We find him, as a German critic has remarked, bestowing incredible pains, not only upon the choice of words, but upon the sequence of long and short syllables, not in order to produce a regularly recurring

metre, but to express the most various emotions of the mind by a suitable and ever-changing rhythm. It is in this art of ordering words with reference to their effect, even more, perhaps, than in the action for which his name is a synonyme, that he exhibits his consummate dexterity as an orator. Change their order, and you at once break the charm. The rhythm, in fact, *is* the sense. You destroy the significance of the sentence as well as its ring; you lessen the intensity of the meaning as well as the verbal force. "At his pleasure," says Professor Marsh, "he separates his lightning and his thunder by an interval that allows his hearer half to forget the coming detonation, or he instantaneously follows up the dazzling flash with a pealing explosion that stuns, prostrates and crushes the stoutest opponent."

Not less did the Roman orators consult the laws of euphonic sequence or metrical convenience, and arrange their words in such a succession of articulate sounds as would fall most pleasingly on the ear. The wonderful effects which sometimes attended their elocution were, in all probability, chiefly owing to their exquisite choice of words and their skill in musical concords. It was by the charm of numbers, as well as by the strength of reason, that Cicero confounded Catiline and silenced the eloquent Hortensius. It was this that deprived Curio of all power of recollection when he rose to oppose that great master of enchanting rhetoric: it was this that made even Cæsar himself tremble, and at last change his determined purpose, and acquit the man he had resolved to condemn. When the Roman orator, Carbo, pronounced, on a certain occasion, the sentence, "*Patris dictum sapiens temeritas filii comprobarit,*" it was astonishing, says Cicero, to ob-

serve the general applause which followed that harmonious close. Doubtless we are ignorant of the art of pronouncing that period with its genuine emphasis; but Cicero assures us that had the final measure,— what is technically called a *dichoree,*— been changed, and the words placed in a different order, their whole effect would have been absolutely destroyed. With the same exquisite sensibility to numbers, an ancient writer says that a similar result would follow, if, in reading the first line of the Æneid,

"Arma virumquc cano, Trojae qui primus ab oris,"

instead of *primus* we were to pronounce it *primis* (*is* being long, and *us* short).

It is this cunning choice, along with the skillful arrangement of words, that, even more than the thought, eternizes the name of an author. Style is, and ever has been, the most vital element of literary immortalities. More than any other quality it is a writer's own property; and no one, not time itself, can rob him of it, or even diminish its value. Facts may be forgotten, learning grow commonplace, startling truths dwindle into mere truisms; but a grand or beautiful style can never lose its freshness or its charm. For his gorgeous style, even more than for his colossal erudition, is Gibbon admired; it is "the ordered march of his lordly prose" that is the secret of Macaulay's charm; and it is the unstudied grace of Hume's periods which renders him, in spite of his imperfect learning, in spite of his willful perversions of truth, in spite of his infidelity and his toryism, the popular historian of England.

From all this it will be seen how absurd it is to suppose that one can adequately enjoy the masterpieces of

literature by means of translations. Among the arguments against the study of the dead languages, none is more pertinaciously urged by the educational red republicans of the day than this,— that the study is useless, because all the great works, the masterpieces of antiquity, have been translated. The man, we are told, who cannot enjoy Carlyle's version of Wilhelm Meister, Melmoth's Cicero, Morris's Virgil, Martin's Horace, or Carter's Epictetus, must be either a prodigious scholar or a prodigious dunce. Sometimes, it is urged, a translator even improves upon the original, as did Coleridge, in the opinion of many, upon Schiller's "Wallenstein." All this seems plausible enough, but the Greek and Latin scholar knows it to be fallacious and false. He knows that the finest passages in an author,— the exquisite thoughts, the curious verbal felicities,— are precisely those which defy reproduction in another tongue. The most masterly translations of them are no more like the original than a walking-stick is like a tree in full bloom. The quintessence of a writer,— the life and spirit,— all that is idiomatic, peculiar, or characteristic,— all that is Homerian in Homer, or Horatian in Horace,— evaporates in a translation.

It is true that, judging by dictionaries only, almost every word in one language has equivalents in every other; but a critical study of language shows, that, with the exception of terms denoting sensible objects and acts, there is rarely a precise coincidence in meaning between any two words in different tongues. Compare any two languages, and you will find that there are, as the mathematicians would say, many incommensurable quantities, many words in each untranslatable into the other, and that it is often impossible, by a paraphrase, to supply an

equivalent. To use De Quincey's happy image from the language of eclipses, the correspondence between the disk of the original word and its translated representative, is, in thousands of instances, not *annular;* the centres do not coincide; the words overlap.

Above all does poetry defy translation. It is too subtle an essence to be poured from one vessel into another without loss. Of Cicero's elegant and copious rhetoric, of the sententious wisdom of Tacitus, of the keen philosophic penetration and masterly narrative talent of Thucydides, of the thunderous eloquence of Demosthenes, and even of Martial's jokes, it may be possible to give some inkling through an English medium; but of the beauties and splendors of the Greek and Latin poets,— never. As soon will another Homer appear on earth, as a translator echo the marvellous music of his lyre. *Imitations* of the "Iliad," more or less accurate, may be given, or *another* poem may be substituted in its place; but a perfect transfusion into English is impossible. For, as Goethe somewhere says, Art depends on Form, and you cannot preserve the form in *altering* the form. Language is a strangely suggestive medium, and it is through the reflex and vague operation of words upon the mind that the translator finds himself baffled. Words, especially in poetry, have a potency of association,— a kind of necromantic power,— aside from their significance as representative signs. There is a mingling of sound and sense, a delicacy of shades of meaning, and a power of awakening associations, to which the instinct of the poet is the key, and which cannot be passed into a foreign language if the *meaning* be also preserved. You may as easily make lace ruffles out of hemp. Language, it cannot be too often repeated, is not

the dress of thought; it is its living expression, and controls both the physiognomy and the organization of the idea it utters.

How many abortive attempts have been made to translate the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" into English verse! What havoc have even Pope and Cowper made of some of the grandest passages in the old bard! The one, it has been well said, turned his lines into a series of brilliant epigrams, sparkling and cold as the Heroic Epistles of Ovid; the other chilled the warmth and toned down the colors of Homer into a sober, drab-tinted hue, through which gods and men loom feebly, and the camp of the Achæans, the synod of the Trojans, and the deities in council, have much of the air of a Quaker meeting-house. Regarded as an English poem, Pope's translation of the "Iliad" is unquestionably a brilliant and exquisitely versified production; but viewed as a transfusion of the old bard into another language, it is but a *caput mortuum*, containing but little more of Homer than the names and events. The fervid and romantic tone, the patriarchal simplicity, the mythologic coloring, the unspeakable audacity and freshness of the images,— all that breathes of an earlier world, and of the sunny shores, and laughing waves, and blue sky, of the old Ægean,— all this, as a critic has observed, "is vanished and obliterated, as is the very swell and fall of the versification, regular in its very irregularity, like the roll of the ocean. Instead of the burning, picture-like words of the old Greek, we have the dainty diction of a literary artist; instead of the ever-varied, resounding swell of the hexameter, the neat, elegant, nicely-balanced modern couplet. In short, the old bard is stripped of his flowing chlamys and his fillets, and is imprisoned in the high-heeled shoes,

the laced velvet coat, and flowing periwig, of the eighteenth century." Chapman, who has more of the spirit of Homer, occasionally catches a note or two from the Ionian trumpet; but presently blows so discordant a blast that it would have grated on the ear of Stentor himself. Lord Derby and William C. Bryant have been more successful in many respects than Pope or Cowper; but each has gained some advantages by compensating defects.

Did Dryden succeed better when he put the "Æneid" into verse? Did he give us that for which Virgil toiled during eleven long years? Did he give us the embodiment of those vulgar impressions which, when the old Latin was read, made the Roman soldier shiver in all his manly limbs? All persons who are familiar with English literature know what havoc Dryden made of "Paradise Lost," when he attempted, even in the same language, to put it into rhyme,— a proposal to do which drew from Milton the contemptuous remark: "Ay, young man; you can tag my rhymes." A man of genius never made a more signal failure. He could not draw the bow of Ulysses. His rhyming, rhetorical manner, splendid and powerful as it confessedly is, proved an utterly inadequate vehicle for the high argument of the great Puritan. So with his modernizations of Chaucer. His reproductions of "the first finder of our faire langage" contain much admirable verse; but it is not Chaucer's. They are simply elaborate paraphrases, in which the idiomatic colors and forms, the distinctive beauties of the old poet,— above all, the simplicity and sly grace of his language, the exquisite tone of *naïveté*, which, like the lispings of infancy, give such a charm to his verse,— utterly vanish. Dryden failed, not from lack of genius, but simply

because failure was inevitable, — because this aroma of antiquity, in the process of transfusion into modern language, is sure to evaporate.

All such changes involve a loss of some subtle trait of expression, or some complexional peculiarity, essential to the truthful exhibition of the original. The outline, the story, the bones remain; but the soul is gone, — the essence, the ethereal light, the perfume is vanished. As well might a painter hope, by using a different kind of tint, to give the expression of one of Raphael's or Titian's masterpieces, as any man expect, by any other words than those which a great poet has used, to convey the same meaning. Even the humblest writer has an idiosyncrasy, a manner of his own, without which the identity and truth of his work are lost. If, then, the meaning and spirit of a poem cannot be transferred from one place to another, so to speak, under the roof of a common language, must it not *a fortiori* be impossible to transport them faithfully across the barriers which divide one language from another, and antiquity from modern times?

How many ineffectual attempts have been made to translate Horace into English and French! It is easy to give the right meaning, or something like the meaning, of his lyrics; but they are cast in a mould of such exquisite delicacy that their ease and elegance defy imitation. All experience shows that the *traditore* must necessarily be *traduttore*, — the translator, a traducer of the Sabine bard. As well might you put a violet into a crucible, and expect to reproduce its beauty and perfume, as expect to reproduce in another tongue the mysterious synthesis of sound and sense, of meaning and suggested association, which constitutes the vital beauty of a lyric.

The special imagination of the poet, it has been well said, is an imagination inseparably bound up with language; possessed by the infinite beauty and the deepest, subtlest meanings of words; skilled in their finest sympathies; powerful to make them yield a meaning which another never could have extracted from them. It is of the very essence of the poet's art, so that, in the highest exercise of that art, there is no such thing as the rendering of an idea in appropriate language; but the conception, and the words in which it is conveyed, are a simultaneous creation, and the idea springs forth full-grown, in its panoply of radiant utterance.

The works of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakspeare, and Goethe, exist in the words as the mind in conjunction with the body. Separation is death. Alter the melody ever so skillfully, and you change the effect. You cannot translate a sound; you cannot give an elegant version of a melody. Prose, indeed, suffers less from paraphrase than poetry; but even in translating a prose work, unless one containing facts or reasoning merely, the most skillful linguist can be sure of hardly more than of transferring the raw material of the original sentiment into his own tongue. The bullion may be there, but its shape is altered; the flower is preserved, but the aroma is gone; there, to be sure, is the arras, with its Gobelin figures, but it is the wrong side out. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that there is as much contrast between the best translation and the original of a great author, as between a wintry landscape, with its dead grass and withered foliage, and the same landscape arrayed in the green robes of summer. Nay, we prefer the humblest original painting to a feeble copy of a great picture,—a barely

"good" original book to any lifeless translation. A living dog is better than a dead lion; for the external attributes of the latter are nothing without the spirit that makes them terrible.

The difficulty of translating from a dead language, of whose onomatopœia we are ignorant, will appear still more clearly, when we consider what gross and ludicrous blunders are made in translating even from one living language into another. It has been well said that few English-speaking persons can understand the audacity of Racine, so highly applauded by the French, in introducing the words *chien* and *sel* into poetry; "dog" and "salt" may be used by us without danger; but, on the other hand, we may not talk of *entrails* in the way the French do. Every one has heard of the Frenchman, who translated the majestic exclamation of Milton's Satan, "Hail! horrors, hail!" by "*Comment vous portez-vous, Messieurs les Horreurs, comment vous portez vous?*" "How do you do, horrors, how do you do?" Another Frenchman, in reproducing the following passage from Shakespeare in his own tongue,

> "Even such a man, so faint, so spiritless,
> So dull, so dead in look, *so woe-begone*,"

translated the italicized words thus: "So, grief, be off with you!" Hardly less ridiculous is the blunder made by a translator of Alexander Smith's "Life-Drama," who metamorphoses the expression, "clothes me with kingdoms," into *me fait un vêtement de royaumes*,— "makes me a garment of kingdoms." What can be more expressive than one of the lines in which Milton describes the lost angels crowding into Pandemonium, where, he says, the air was

> "*Brushed* with the *hiss* of *rustling* wings,"

a line which it is impossible to translate into words that

will convey precisely the same emotions and suggestions that are roused by a perusal of the original. Suppose the translator to hit so near to the original as to write

"Stirred with the noise of quivering wings,"

will not the line affect you altogether differently? Let one translate into another language the following line of Shakespeare,

"The learned *pate ducks* to the golden fool,"

and is it at all likely that the quaint, comic effect of the words we have italicized would be reproduced?

The inadequacy of translations will be more strikingly exemplified by comparing the following exquisite lines of Shakespeare with such a version as we might expect in another language: —

"How sweet the moonlight *sleeps* upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony."

A foreign translator, says Leigh Hunt, would dilute and take all taste and freshness out of this draught of poetry, after some such fashion as the following: —

"With what a charm the moon serene and bright
Lends on the bank its soft reflected light!
Sit we, I pray, and let us sweetly hear
The strains melodious, with a raptured ear;
For soft retreats, and night's impressive hour,
To harmony impart divinest power."

In view of all these considerations, what can be more untrue than the statement so often made, that to be capable of easy translation is a test of the excellence of a composition? This doctrine, it has been well observed, goes upon the assumption that one language is just like another language,— that every language has all the ideas, turns of thought, delicacies of expression, figures, associa-

tions, abstractions, points of view which every other language has. "Now, as far as regards Science, it is true that all languages are pretty much alike for the purposes of Science; but even in this respect some are more suitable than others, which have to coin words or to borrow them, in order to express scientific ideas. But if languages are not all equally adapted even to furnish symbols for those universal and eternal truths in which Science consists, how can they be reasonably expected to be all equally rich, equally forcible, equally musical, equally exact, equally happy, in expressing the idiosyncratic peculiarities of thought of some original and fertile mind, who has availed himself of one of them? A great author takes his native language, masters it, partly throws himself into it, partly moulds and partly adapts it, and pours out his multitude of ideas through the variously ramified and delicately minute channels of expression which he has found or framed: does it follow that this his personal presence (as it may be called) can forthwith be transferred to every other language under the sun? Then we may reasonably maintain that Beethoven's *piano* music is not really beautiful, because it cannot be played on the hurdy-gurdy. . .

"It seems that a really great author must admit of translation, and that we have a test of his excellence when he reads to advantage in a foreign language as well as in his own. Then Shakspeare *is* a genius because he can be translated into German, and not a genius because he cannot be translated into French. The multiplication-table is the most gifted of all conceivable compositions, because it loses nothing by translation, and can hardly be said to belong to any one language whatever. Whereas I should rather have conceived that, in proportion as ideas are novel and recon-

dite, they would be difficult to put into words, and that the very fact of their having insinuated themselves into one language would diminish the chance of that happy accident being repeated in another. In the language of savages you can hardly express any idea or act of the intellect at all. Is the tongue of the Hottentot or Esquimau to be made the measure of the genius of Plato, Pindar, Tacitus, St. Jerome, Dante, or Cervantes?" *

The truth is, music written for one instrument cannot be played upon another. To the most cunning writer that ever tried to translate the beauties of an author into a foreign tongue, we may say in the language of a French critic: "You are that ignorant musician who plays his part exactly, not skipping a single note, nor neglecting a rest,—only what is written in the key of *fa*, he plays in the key of *sol*. Faithful translator!"

When we think of the marvellous moral influence which words have exercised in all ages, we cannot wonder that the ancients believed there was a subtle sorcery in them, "a certain bewitchery or fascination," indicating that language is of mystic origin. The Gothic nations supposed that even their mysterious alphabetical characters, called "Runes," possessed magical powers; that they could stop a sailing vessel or a flying arrow; that they could excite love or hate, or even raise the dead. The Romans, in their levies, took care to enrol first names of good omen, such as Victor, Valerius, Salvius, Felix, and Faustus. Cæsar gave a command in Spain to an obscure Scipio, merely for the omen which his name involved. When an expedition had been planned under the leadership of Atrius Niger, the soldiers absolutely refused to proceed under a commander

* J. H. Newman.

of so ill-omened a name,—*dux abominandi nominis*,—it being, as De Quincey says, "a pleonasm of darkness." The same deep conviction that words are powers is seen in the *favete linguis* and *bona verba quæso* of the Romans, by which they endeavored to repress the utterance of any word suggestive of ill-fortune, lest the event so suggested to the imagination should actually occur. So they were careful to avoid, by euphemisms, the utterance of any word directly expressive of death or other calamity, saying *vixit* instead of *mortuus est*, and "be the event fortunate or otherwise," instead of *adverse*. The name Egesta they changed into Segesta, Maleventum into Beneventum, Axeinos into Euxine, and Epidamnus into Dyrrhachium, to escape the perils of a word suggestive of *damnum*, or detriment. Even in later times the same feeling has prevailed,—an illustration of which we have in the life of Pope Adrian VI., who, when elected, dared not retain his own name, as he wished, because he was told by his cardinals that every Pope who had done so had died in the first year of his reign.

That there is a secret instinct which leads even the most illiterate peoples to recognize the potency of words, is illustrated by the use made of names, in the East, in "the black art." In the Island of Java, a fearful influence, it is said, attaches to names, and it is believed that demons, invoked in the name of a living individual, can be made to appear. One of the magic arts practised there is to write a man's name on a skull, a bone, a shroud, a bier, an image made of paste, and then put it in a place where two roads meet, when a fearful enchantment, it is believed, will be wrought against the person whose name is so inscribed.

But we need not go to antiquity or to barbarous nations to learn the mystic power of words. There is not a day, hardly an hour of our lives, which does not furnish examples of their ominous force. Shakspeare makes one of his characters say of another, "She speaks poniards, and every word stabs"; and there are, indeed, words which are sharper than drawn swords, which give more pain than a score of blows; and, again, there are words by which pain of soul is relieved, hidden grief removed, sympathy conveyed, counsel imparted, and courage infused. How often has a word of recognition to the struggling confirmed a sublime yet undecided purpose,— a word of sympathy opened a new vista to the desolate, that let in a prospect of heaven,— a word of truth fired a man of action to do a deed which has saved a nation or a cause, or a genius to write words which have gone ringing down the ages!

"I have known a word more gentle
Than the breath of summer air;
In a listening heart it nestled,
And it lived forever there.
Not the beating of its prison
Stirred it ever, night or day;
Only with the heart's last throbbing
Could it ever fade away."

A late writer has truly said that "there may be phrases which shall be palaces to dwell in, treasure-houses to explore; a single word may be a window from which one may perceive all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. Oftentimes a word shall speak what accumulated volumes have labored in vain to utter; there may be years of crowded passion in a word, and half a life in a sentence."

"Nothing," says Hawthorne, "is more unaccountable than the spell that often lurks in a spoken word. A thought may be present to the mind so distinctly that no

utterance could make it more so; and two minds may be conscious of the same thought, in which one or both take the profoundest interest; but as long as it remains unspoken, their familiar talk flows quietly over the hidden idea, as a rivulet may sparkle and dimple over something sunken in its bed. But speak the word, and it is like bringing up a drowned body out of the deepest pool of the rivulet, which has been aware of the horrible secret all along, in spite of its smiling surface."

The significance of words is illustrated by nothing, perhaps, more strikingly than by the fact that unity of speech is essential to the unity of a people. Community of language is a stronger bond than identity of religion, government, or interests; and nations of one speech, though separated by broad oceans and by creeds yet more widely divorced, are one in culture, one in feeling. Prof. Marsh has well observed that the fine patriotic effusion of Arndt, "Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland," was founded upon the idea that the oneness of the Deutsche Zunge, the German speech, implied a oneness of spirit, of aims, and of duties; and the universal acceptance with which the song was received showed that the poet had struck a chord to which every Teutonic heart responded. When a nation is conquered by another, which would hold it in subjection, it has to be again conquered, especially if its character is essentially opposed to that of its conqueror, and the second conquest is often the more difficult of the two. To kill it effectually, its nationality must be killed, and this can be done only by killing its language; for it is through its language that its national prejudices, its loves and hates, and passions live. When this is not done, the old language, slowly dying out,— if, indeed, it dies at

all,—has time to convey the national traditions into the new language, thus perpetuating the enmities that keep the two nations asunder. We see this illustrated in the Irish language, which, with all the ideas and feelings of which that language is the representative and the vehicle, has been permitted by the English government to die a lingering death of seven or eight centuries. The co-existence of two languages in a State, is one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall it. The settlement of townships and counties in our country, by distinct bodies of foreigners, is, therefore, a great evil; and a daily newspaper, with an Irish, German, or French prefix, or in a foreign language, is a perpetual breeder of national animosities, and an effectual bar to the Americanization of our foreign population.

The languages of conquered peoples, like the serfs of the middle ages, appear to be *glebae adscriptitiae*, and to extirpate them, except by extirpating the native race itself, is an almost impossible task. Rome, though she conquered Greece, could not plant her language there. The barbarians who overran the Roman Empire, adopted the languages of their new subjects; the Avars and Slaves who settled in Greece became Hellenized in language; the Northmen in France adopted a Romanic tongue; and the Germans in France and northern Italy, as well as the Goths in Spain, conformed to the speech of the tribes they had vanquished. It is asserted, on not very good authority, that William the Conqueror fatigued his ear and exhausted his patience, during the first years of his sovereignty, in trying to learn the Saxon language; but, failing, ordered the Saxons to speak Norman-French. He might as well have ordered his new subjects to walk on

their heads. Charles the Fifth, in all the plenitude of his power, could not have compelled all his subjects, Dutch, Flemish, German, Italian, Spanish, etc., to learn his language; he had to learn theirs, though a score in number, as had Charlemagne before him.

England has maintained her dominion in the East for more than a hundred and fifty years, yet the mass of Hindoos know no more of her language than of the Greek. In the last century, Joseph II., of Austria, issued an edict that all his subjects, German, Slavonic, or Magyar, should speak and write one language,—German; but the people recked his decree as little as did the sea that of Canute. Many of the provinces broke out into open rebellion; and the project was finally abandoned. The Venetians were for a long period under the Austrian yoke; but they spoke as pure Italian as did any of their independent countrymen, and they never detested their rulers more heartily than at the time of their deliverance. Were different languages spoken in the different sections of the United States, the task of allaying the bitter feeling of hostility at the South, which led to the late outbreak, and of fusing the citizens of the North and of the South into one homogeneous people, would be almost hopeless.

A volume might be filled with illustrations of the power of words; but, great as is their power, and though, when nicely chosen, they have an intrinsic force, it is, after all, the *man* who makes them potent. As it was not the famous needle-gun, destructive as it is, which won the late Prussian victories, but the intelligence and discipline of the Prussian soldier, the man *behind* the gun, educated in the best common schools in the world,—so it is the latent heat of character, the man

behind the words, that gives them momentum and projectile force. The same words, coming from one person, are as the idle wind that kisses the cheeks; coming from another, they are the cannon-shot that pierces the target in the bull's-eye. The thing said is the same in each case; the enormous difference lies in the man who says it. The man fills out, crowds his words with meaning, and sends them out to do a giant's work; or he makes them void and nugatory, impotent to reach their destination, or to do any execution should they hit the mark. The weight and value of opinions and sentiments depend oftentimes less upon their intrinsic worth than upon the degree in which they have been organized into the nature of the person who utters them; their force, less upon their inherent power than upon the latent heat stored away in their formation, which is liberated in their publication.

There is in character a force which is felt as deeply, and which is as irresistible, as the mightiest physical force, and which makes the plainest expressions of some men like consuming fire. Their words, instead of being the barren signs of abstract ideas, are the media through which the life of one mind is radiated into other minds. They inspire, as well as inform; electrify, as well as enlighten. Even truisms from their lips have the effect of original perceptions; and old saws and proverbs, worn to shreds by constant repetition, startle the ear like brilliant fancies. Some of the greatest effects recorded in the history of eloquence have been produced by words which, when read, strike us as tame and commonplace. Whitefield could thrill an audience by an insignificant term. Even his interjections,— his *Ah!* of pity and his *Oh!* of

encouragement for the sinner,—were words of tremendous power, and formed a most potent engine in his pulpit artillery. Garrick used to say that he would give a hundred guineas if he could say *Oh!* as Whitefield did.

Grattan said of the eloquence of Charles James Fox, that "every sentence came rolling like a wave of the Atlantic, three thousand miles long." Willis says that every word of Webster weighs a pound. College sophomores, newly-fledged lawyers, and representatives from Bunkumville, often display more fluency than the New Hampshire giant; but his words are to theirs as the roll of thunder to the patter of rain. What makes his argument so ponderous and destructive to his opponents, is not its own weight alone, but in a great degree the added weight of his temper and constitution, the trip-hammer *momentum* with which he makes it fall upon the theory he means to crush. Even the vast mass of the man helped, too, to make his words impressive. "He carried men's minds, and overwhelmingly pressed his thought upon them, with the immense current of his physical energy." When the great champion of New England said, in the United States Senate, "There are Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill, and there they will remain forever," it was the weight of character, and of all the associations connected with it, which changed that which, uttered by another, would have been the merest truism, into a lofty and memorable sentiment. The majesty of the utterance, which is said to have quickened the pulse even of "the great Nullifier," Calhoun, is due to the fact that it came from a mighty nature, which had weighed and felt all the meaning which those three spots represent in the stormy history of the world.

It was this which gave such prodigious power to the words of Chatham, and made them smite his adversaries like an electric battery. It was the haughty assumption of superiority, the scowl of his imperial brow, the ominous growl of his voice, "like thunder heard remote," the impending lightnings which seemed ready to dart from his eyes, and, above all, the evidence which these furnished of an imperious and overwhelming will, that abashed the proudest peers in the House of Lords, and made his words perform the office of stabs and blows. The same words, issuing from other lips, would have been as harmless as pop-guns.

In reading the quotations from Chalmers, which are reported to have so overwhelmingly oppressed those who heard them, almost every one is disappointed. It is the creative individuality projected into the words that makes the entire difference between Kean or Kemble and the poorest stroller that murders Shakspeare. It is said that Macready never produced a more thrilling effect than by the simple words, *"Who said that?"* An acute American writer observes that when Sir Edward Coke, a man essentially commonplace in his intellect and prejudices, though of vast acquirement and giant force of character, calls Sir Walter Raleigh "a spider of hell," the metaphor may not seem remarkable; but it has a terrible significance when we see the whole roused might of Sir Edward Coke glaring through it.* What can be more effective than the speech of Thersites in the first book of the "Iliad"? Yet the only effect was to bring down upon the speaker's shoulders the staff of Ulysses. Pope well observes that, had Ulysses made the same speech, the troops would have

* "Literature and Life," by Edwin P. Whipple.

sailed for Greece that very night. The world considers not merely what is said, but *who* speaks, and *whence* he says it.

> "Let but a lord once own the happy lines,
> How the wit brightens, how the style refines!"

says the same poet of a servile race; and Euripides expresses the same belief in the efficacy of position and character when he makes Hecuba entreat Ulysses to intercede for her; "for the arguments," says she, "which are uttered by men of repute, are very different in strength from those uttered by men unknown."

The significance of the simplest epithet depends upon the character of the man that uses it. Let two men of different education, tastes, and habits of thought, utter the word "grand," and our sense of the word is modified according to our knowledge of the men.

Mr. Whipple says truly that "there are no more simple words than 'green,' 'sweetness,' and 'rest,' yet what depth and intensity of significance shines in Chaucer's 'green'— what a still ecstasy of religious bliss irradiates 'sweetness,' as it drops from the pen of Jonathan Edwards; what celestial repose beams from 'rest' as it lies on the page of Barrow! The moods seem to transcend the resources of language; yet they are expressed in common words, transfigured, sanctified, imparadised by the spiritual vitality which streams through them." The same critic, in speaking of style as the measure of a writer's power, observes that "the marvel of Shakspeare's diction is its immense suggestiveness,— his power of radiating through new verbal combinations, or through single expressions, a life and meaning which they do not retain in their removal to dictionaries. When the thought is so subtle, or the emotion so evanescent, or the imagination so remote, that it cannot be flashed upon

the 'inward eye,' it is hinted to the inward ear by some exquisite variation of tone. An American essayist on Shakspeare, Mr. Emerson, in speaking of the impossibility of acting or reciting his plays, refers to this magical suggestiveness in a sentence almost as remarkable as the thing it describes. 'The recitation,' he says, 'begins; one golden word leaps out immortal from all this painted pedantry, *and sweetly torments us with invitations to its own inaccessible homes!*' He who has not felt this witchery in Shakspeare's style has never read him. He may have looked *at* the words, but has never looked into them."

The fact that words are never taken absolutely,— that they are expressions, not simply of thoughts or feelings, but of natures,— that they are media for the emission and transpiration of character, — is one that cannot be too deeply pondered by young speakers and writers. Fluent young men who wonder that the words which they utter with such glibness and emphasis have so little weight with their hearers, should ask themselves whether their characters are such as to give weight to their words. As in engineering it is a rule that a cannon should be at least one hundred times heavier than its shot, so a man's character should be a hundred times heavier than what he says. When a La Place or a Humboldt talks of the "universe," the word has quite another meaning than when it is used by plain John Smith, whose ideas have never extended beyond the town of Hull. So, when a man's friend gives him religious advice, and talks of "the solemn responsibilities of life," it makes a vast difference in the weight of the words whether they come from one who has been tried and proved in the world's fiery furnace, and whose whole life has been a trip-hammer to drive home what he says, or

from a callow youth who prates of that which he feels not, and testifies to things which are not realities to his own consciousness. There is a hollow ring in the words of the cleverest man who talks of "trials and tribulations" which he has never felt. "Words," says the learned Selden, "must be fitted to a man's mouth. 'Twas well said by the fellow that was to make a speech for my Lord Mayor, that he desired first to take measure of his Lordship's mouth."

We are accustomed to go to the dictionary for the meaning of words; but it is *life* that discloses to us their significance in all the vivid realities of experience. It is the actual world, with its joys and sorrows, its pleasures and pains, that reveals to us their joyous or terrible meanings — meanings not to be found in Worcester or Webster. Does the young and light-hearted maiden know the meaning of "sorrow," or the youth just entering on a business career understand the significance of the words "failure" and "protest"? Go to the hod-carrier, climbing the many-storied building under a July sun, for the meaning of "toil"; and, for a definition of "overwork," go to the pale seamstress who

> "In midnight's chill and murk
> Stitches her life into her work;
> Bending backwards from her toil,
> Lest her tears the silk might soil;
> Shaping from her bitter thought
> Heart's-ease and forget-me-not;
> Satirizing her despair
> With the emblems woven there!"

Ask the hoary-headed debauchee, bankrupt in purse, friends, and reputation,— with disease racking every limb,— for the definition of "remorse"; and go to the bedside of the invalid for the proper understanding of "health." Life, with its inner experience, reveals to us the tremendous force of

words, and writes upon our hearts the ineffaceable records of their meanings. Man is a dictionary, and human experience the great lexicographer. Hundreds of human beings pass from their cradles to their graves who know not the force of the commonest terms; while to others their terrible significance comes home like an electric flash, and sends a thrill to the innermost fibres of their being.

To conclude,—it is one of the marvels of language, that out of the twenty plain elementary sounds of which the human voice is capable, have been formed all the articulate voices which, for six thousand or more years, have sufficed to express all the sentiments of the human race. Few as are these sounds, it has been calculated that one thousand million writers, in one thousand million years, could not write out all the combinations of the twenty-four letters of the alphabet, if each writer were daily to write out forty pages of them, and if each page should contain different orders of the twenty-four letters. Another remarkable fact is that the vocal organs are so constructed as to be exactly adapted to the properties of the atmosphere which conveys their sounds, while at the same time the organs of hearing are fitted to receive with pleasure the sounds conveyed. Who can estimate the misery that man would experience were his sense of hearing so acute that the faintest whisper would give him pain, and a peal of thunder strike him deaf or dead?

> "If Nature thunder'd in his opening ears,
> And stunn'd him with the music of the spheres,
> How would he wish that Heaven had left him still,
> The whispering zephyr and the purling rill!"

CHAPTER II.

THE MORALITY IN WORDS.

Genus dicendi imitatur publicos mores... Non potest alius esse ingenio, alius animo color.—SENECA.

The world is satisfied with words; few care to dive beneath the surface. —PASCAL.

Words are the signs and symbols of things; and as in accounts, ciphers and symbols pass for real sums, so, in the course of human affairs, words and names pass for things themselves.—ROBERT SOUTH.

Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil.—ISAIAH v. 20.

THE fact that a man's language is a part of his character,—that the words he uses are an index to his mind and heart,—must have been noted long before language was made a subject of investigation. "Discourse," says Quintilian, "reveals character, and discloses the secret disposition and temper; and not without reason did the Greeks teach that as a man lived so would he speak." *Profert enim mores plerumque oratio, et animi secreta detegit. Nec sine causa Græci prodiderunt, ut vivat, quemque etiam dicere.* When a clock is foul and disordered, its wheels warped or cogs broken, the bell-hammer and the hands will proclaim the fact; instead of being a guide, it will mislead, and, while the disorder continues, will continually betray its own infirmity. So when a man's mind is disordered or his heart corrupted, there will gather on his face and in his language an expression corresponding to the irregularities within. There is, indeed, a physiognomy in the speech as well as in the face. As physicians judge of the state of the body, so may we judge of the mind, by the tongue. Except under

peculiar circumstances, where prudence, shame, or delicacy, seals the mouth, the objects dearest to the heart,—the pet words, phrases, or shibboleths, the terms expressing our strongest appetencies and antipathies,—will rise most frequently to the lips; and Ben Jonson, therefore, did not exaggerate in saying that no glass renders a man's form and likeness so true as his speech. "As a man speaks, so he thinks; and as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

If a man is clear-headed, noble-minded, sincere, just, and pure in thought and feeling, these qualities will be symbolized in his words; and, on the other hand, if he has a confused habit of thought, is mean, grovelling, and hypocritical, these characteristics will reveal themselves in his speech. The door-keeper of an alien household said to Peter, "Thou art surely a Galilean; thy speech bewrayeth thee"; and so in spite of all masks and professions, in spite of his reputation, the essential nature of every person will stamp itself on his language. How often do the words and tones of a professedly religious man, who gives liberally to the church, prays long and loud in public, and attends rigidly to every outward observance, betray in some mysterious way the utter worldliness of his character! How frequently do words uttered volubly, and with a pleasing elocution, affect us as mere sounds, suggesting only the hollowness and unreality of the speaker's character! How often does the use of a single word flash more light upon a man's motives and principles of action, give a deeper insight into his habits of thought and feeling, than an entire biography! How often when a secret sorrow preys upon the heart, which we would fain hide from the world by a smiling face, do we betray it unconsciously by a trivial or parenthetical word! Fast locked do we deem our Bluebeard

chamber to be, the key and the secret of which we have in our own possession; yet all the time a crimson stream is flowing across the door-sill, telling of murdered hopes within.

Out of the immense magazine of words furnished by our English vocabulary,— embracing over a hundred thousand distinct terms,— each man selects his own favorite expressions, his own forms of syntax, by a peculiar law which is part of the essential difference between him and all other men; and in the verbal stock-in-trade of each individual we should find, could it once be laid open to us, a key that would unlock many of the deepest mysteries of his humanity,— many of the profoundest secrets of his private history. How often is a man's character revealed by the adjectives he uses! Like the inscriptions on a thermometer, these words of themselves reveal the temperament. The conscientious man weighs his words as in a hair-balance; the boaster and the enthusiast employ extreme phrases, as if there were no degree but the superlative. The cautious man uses words as the rifleman does bullets; he utters but few words, but they go to the mark like a gunshot, and then he is silent again, as if he were reloading. The dogmatist is known by his sweeping, emphatic language, and the absence of all qualifying terms, such as "perhaps" and "it may be." The fact that the word "glory" predominates in all of Bonaparte's dispatches, while in those of his great adversary, Wellington, which fill twelve enormous volumes, it never once occurs — not even after the hardest won victory,— but "duty," "duty," is invariably named as the motive for every action, speaks volumes touching their respective characters. It was to work out the problem of self-aggrandizement that Napoleon devoted

all his colossal powers; and *conscience, responsibility*, and kindred terms, seem never to have found their way into his vocabulary. Men, with their physical and moral force, their bodily energies, and their passions, prejudices, delusions, and enthusiasms, were to him but as fuel to swell the blaze on the altar of that ambition of which he was at once the priest and deity. Of duties to them he never for a moment dreamed; for, from the hot May-day of Lodi to the autumnal night of Moscow, when he fled the flaming Kremlin, he seemed unconscious that he was himself a created and responsible being.

Dr. Arnold has strikingly shown how we may judge of a historian by his style, his language being an infallible index to his character. "If it is very heavy and cumbrous, it indicates either a dull man or a pompous man, or at least a slow and awkward man; if it be tawdry and full of commonplaces enunciated with great solemnity, the writer is most likely a silly man; if it be highly antithetical and full of unusual expressions, or artificial ways of stating a plain thing, the writer is clearly an affected man. If it be plain and simple, always clear, but never eloquent, the writer may be a very sensible man, but is too hard and dry to be a very great man. If, on the other hand, it is always elegant, rich in illustrations, and without the relief of simple and great passages, we must admire the writer's genius in a very high degree, but we may fear that he is too continually excited to have attained to the highest wisdom, for that is necessarily calm. In this manner the mere language of a historian will furnish us with something of a key to his mind, and will tell us, or at least give us cause to presume, in what his main strength lies, and in what he is deficient."

As with individuals, so with nations: the language of a people is often a moral barometer, which marks with marvellous precision the rise or fall of the national life. The stock of words composing any language corresponds to the knowledge of the community that speaks it, and shows with what objects it is familiar, what generalizations it has made, what distinctions it has drawn,— all its cognitions and reasonings, in the worlds of matter and of mind. "As our material condition varies, as our ways of life, our institutions, public and private, become other than they have been, all is necessarily reflected in our language. In these days of railroads, steamboats, and telegraphs, of sun pictures, of chemistry and geology, of improved wearing stuffs, furniture, styles of building, articles of food and luxury of every description, how many words and phrases are in everyone's mouth which would be utterly unintelligible to the most learned man of a century ago, were he to rise from his grave and walk our streets! . . . Language is expanded and contracted in precise adaptation to the circumstances and needs of those who use it; it is enriched or impoverished, in every part, along with the enrichment or impoverishment of their minds."* Every race has its own organic growth, its own characteristic ideas and opinions, which are impressed on its political constitution, its legislation, its manners and its customs, its modes of religious worship; and the expression of all these peculiarities is found in its speech. If a people is, as Milton said of the English, a noble and a puissant nation, of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, acute to invent and subtile to discourse, its language will exhibit all these qualities; while, on the other hand, if it is frivolous and

* "Language and the Study of Language," by W. D. Whitney.

low-thoughted,— if it is morally bankrupt and dead to all lofty sentiments,— its mockery of virtue, its inability to comprehend the true dignity and meaning of life, the feebleness of its moral indignation, will all inevitably betray themselves in its speech, as truly as would the opposite qualities of spirituality of thought and exaltation of soul. These discreditable qualities will find an utterance "in the use of solemn and earnest words in senses comparatively trivial or even ridiculous; in the squandering of such as ought to have been reserved for the highest mysteries of the spiritual life, on slight and secular objects; and in the employment, almost in jest and play, of words implying the deepest moral guilt."

Could anything be more significant of the profound degradation of a people than the abject character of the complimentary and social dialect of the Italians, and the pompous appellations with which they dignify things in themselves insignificant, as well as their constant use of intensives and superlatives on the most trivial occasions? Is it not a notable fact that they, who for so long a time had no country,— on whose altars the fires of patriotism have, till of late, burned so feebly,— use the word *pellegrino,* (foreign,) as a synonyme for "excellent"? Might we not almost infer *à priori* the servile condition to which, previous to their late uprising, centuries of tyranny had reduced them, from the fact that with the same people, so many of whom are clothed in rags, a man of honor is "a well-dressed man"; that a *virtuoso,* or virtuous man, is one who is accomplished in music, painting, and sculpture,— arts which should be the mere embroidery, and not the web and woof, of a nation's life; that, in their magnificent indigence, they call a cottage with three or four

acres of land "a power"; that they term every house with a large door *un palazzo* (a palace), a lamb's fry *una cosa stupenda,* (a stupendous thing), and that a message sent by a footman to his tailor through a scullion is "an embassy"?

Let us not, however, infer the *hopeless* depravity of any people from the baseness of the tongue they have inherited, not chosen. It makes a vast difference, as Prof. Marsh justly observes, whether words expressive of noble thoughts and mighty truths do not exist in a language, or whether ages of soul-crushing tyranny have compelled their disuse and the employment of the baser part of the national vocabulary. The mighty events that have lately taken place in Italy "show that a tone of hypocrisy may cling to the tongue, long after the spirit of a nation is emancipated, and that where grand words are found in a speech, there grand thoughts, noble purposes, high resolves exist also, or, at least, the spark slumbers which a favoring breath may, at any moment, kindle into a cherishing and devouring flame."*

A late writer calls attention to the fact that the French language, while it has such positive expressions as "drunk" and "tipsy," conveyed by *ivre* and *gris*, contains no such negative term as "sober." *Sobre* means always "temperate" or "abstemious," never the opposite condition to intoxication. The English, it is argued, drink enough to need a special illustrative title for a man who has not drunk; but though the Parisians began to drink alcohol freely during the sieges, the French "have never yet felt the necessity of forming any such curious subjective appellation, consequently they have not got it." Again, the

* "Lectures on the English Language."

French boast that they have no such word as *bribe,* as if this implied their exemption from that sin; and such, indeed, may be the fact. But may not the absence of this word from their vocabulary prove, on the contrary, their lack of sensibility to the heinous nature of the offence, just as the lack of the word *humility* in the language of the Greeks, usually so rich in terms, proves that they lacked the thing itself, or as the fact that the same people had no word corresponding to the Latin *ineptus,* argues, as Cicero thought, not that the character designated by the word was wanting among them, but that the fault was so universal with them that they failed to recognize it as such? Is it not a great defect in a language that it lacks the words by which certain forms of baseness or sinfulness, in those who speak it, may be brought home to their consciousness? Can we properly hate or abhor any wicked act till we have given it a specific objective existence by giving it a name which shall at once designate and condemn it? The *pot-de-vin,* and other jesting phrases which the French have coined to denote bribery, can have no effect but to encourage this wrong.

What shall we think of the fact that the French language has no word equivalent to "listener"? Is it not a noteworthy circumstance, shedding light upon national character, that among thirty-seven million of talkers, no provision, except the awkward paraphrase *celui qui écoute* (he who hears), should have been made for hearers? Is there any other explanation of this blank than the supposition that every Frenchman talks from the pure love of talking, and not to be heard; that, reversing the proverb, he believes that "silence is silver, but talking is golden"; and that, not caring whether he is listened to

or not, he has never recognized that he has no name for the person to whom he chatters? Again, is it not remarkable that, among the French, *bonhomme* (a good man) is a term of contempt; that the fearful Hebrew word, "gehenna," has been condensed into *gêne*, and means only a petty annoyance; and that *honnêteté*, which once meant honesty, now means only civility? It was in the latter half of the reign of Louis XIV. that the word *honnête* exchanged its primitive for its present meaning. Till then, according to good authority, when a man's descent was said to be *honnête*, he was complimented on the virtuousness of his progenitors, not reminded of the mediocrity of their condition; and when the same term was applied to his family, it was an acknowledgment that they belonged to the middle ranks of society, not a suggestion that they were plebeians. Again: how significant is the fact that the French have no such words as "home," "comfort," "spiritual," and but one word for "love" and "like," compelling them to put Heaven's last gift to man on a par with an article of diet; as, "I love Julia,"—"I love a leg of mutton"? Couple with these peculiarities of the language the circumstance that the French term *spirituel* means simply witty, with a certain quickness, delicacy, and versatility of mind, and have you not a real insight into the national character?

It is said that the word oftenest on a Frenchman's lips is *la gloire*, and next to that, perhaps, is *brillant*—brilliant. The utility of a feat or achievement in literature or science, in war or politics, surgery or mechanics, is of little moment in his eyes unless it also dazzles and excites surprise. It is said that Sir Astley Cooper, the great British surgeon, on visiting the French capital, was

asked by the surgeon *en chef* of the empire how many times he had performed some feat of surgery that required a rare union of dexterity and nerve. He replied that he had performed the operation thirteen times. "Ah! but, Monsieur, I have performed him one hundred and sixty time. How many time did you save his life?" continued the curious Frenchman, as he saw the blank amazement of Sir Astley's face. "I," said the Englishman, "saved eleven out of the thirteen. How many did *you* save out of a hundred and sixty?" "Ah! Monsieur, I lose dem all;—but de operation was very *brillant!*"

The author of "Pickwick" tells us that in America the sign vocal for starting a coach, steamer, railway train, etc., is "Go Ahead!" while with John Bull the ritual form is "All Right!"—and he adds that these two expressions are perfect embodiments of the respective moods of the two nations. There is some exaggeration in this; yet the two phrases are, on the whole, vivid miniatures of John Bull and his restless brother, who sits on the safety-valve that he may travel faster, pours oil and rosin into his steam-furnaces, leaps from the cars before they have entered the depot, and who would hardly object to being fired off from a cannon or in a bombshell, provided there were one chance in fifty of getting sooner to the end of his journey. Let us hope that the day may yet come when our "two-forty" people will exchange a little of their fiery activity for a bit of Bull's caution, and when our Yankee Herald's College, if we ever have one, may declare "All Right!" to be the motto of our political escutcheon, with as much propriety as it might now inscribe "Go Ahead!" beneath that fast fowl, the annexing and screaming eagle, that hovers over the peaks of the Rocky Mountains, dips

its wings in two oceans, and has one eye on Cuba and the other on Quebec.

A volume might be filled with illustrations of the truth that the language of nations is a mirror, in which may be seen reflected with unerring accuracy all the elements of their intellectual as well as of their moral character. What scholar that is familiar with Greek and Latin has failed to remark how indelibly the contrariety of character in the two most civilized nations of antiquity is impressed on their languages, distinguished as is the one by exuberant originality, the other by innate poverty of thought? In the Greek, that most flexible and perfect of all the European tongues, the thought controls and shapes the language; while the tyrannous objectivity of the Latin, rigid and almost cruel, like the nation whose voice it is, coerces rather than simply syllables the thought. The words of the latter, as Prof. Marsh remarks, are always

"Sic volo, sic jubeo, stet pro ratione voluntas";

and "it is almost as much by the imperatorial character of the language itself,—the speech of masters, not of men,—as by the commanding position of the people to whom it was vernacular, and of the church which sagaciously adopted it, that it has so powerfully influenced the development and the existing tendencies of all modern European tongues, even of those which have borrowed the fewest words from it."

It is a noteworthy fact that, as the Romans were the most majestic of nations, so theirs is the only ancient language that contains the word *majesty*, the Greek having nothing that exactly corresponds to it; and the Latin language is as majestic as were the Romans themselves.

While the Romans retained their early simplicity and nobility of soul, their language was full of power and truth; but when they became luxurious, sensual, and corrupt, their words degenerated into miserable and meaningless counters, without intrinsic value, and serving only as a conventional medium of exchange. "In the pedantry of Statius, in the puerility of Martial, in the conceits of Seneca, in the poets who would go into emulous raptures on the beauty of a lap-dog and the apotheosis of a eunuch's hair, we read the hand-writing of an empire's condemnation."

Both the climate of a country and the mind of its people are revealed in its speech. "The mountain Greek has no tone of the soft Ionic. The Anglo-Saxon casts abroad in its short, stern, and solemn words, the awfulness of the forests where it grew." It is said that in the South Sea Islands version of the New Testament there are whole chapters with no words ending in consonants, except the proper names of the original. Italian has been called the love-talk of the Roman without his armor. Fuller, contrasting the Italians and the Swiss, quaintly remarks that the former, "whose country is called *the country of good words,* love the circuits of courtesy, that an ambassador should not, as a sparrow-hawk, fly outright to his prey, and meddle presently with the matter in hand; but, with the noble falcon, mount in language, soar high, fetch compasses of compliment, and then in due time stoop to game, and seize on the business propounded. Clean contrary the Switzers (who sent word to the king of France not to send them an ambassador with store of words, but a treasurer with plenty of money,) count all words quite out which are not straight on, have an antipathy against

eloquent language, the flowers of rhetoric being as offensive to them as sweet perfume to such as are troubled with the mother; yea, generally, great soldiers have their stomachs sharp set to feed on the matter; loathing long speeches, as wherein they conceive themselves to lose time, in which they could conquer half a country; and, counting bluntness their best eloquence, love to be accosted in their own kind."

It is in the idioms of a people, its peculiar turns of expression, and the modifications of meaning which its borrowed words have undergone, that its distinctive genius is most strikingly seen. The forms of salutation used by different nations are saturated with their idiosyncrasies, and of themselves alone essentially reveal their respective characters. How clearly is the innermost distinction between the Greek mind and the Hebrew brought out in the "Rejoice" of the one and the "Peace" of the other! How vividly are contrasted, in the two salutations, the sunny, world-enjoying temper of the one people with the profound religious feeling of the other! The formula of the robust, energetic, valiant Roman, with whom health was another name for happiness, was "Salve!" that is, "Be well," "Be strong." In the expression, "If God wills it, you are well," is betrayed the fatalism of the Arab; while the greeting of the Turk, "May your shadow never be less!" speaks of a sunny clime. In the hot, oppressive climate of Egypt, perspiration is necessary to health, and you are asked, "How do you perspire?" The Italian asks, "Come sta?"—literally, "How does he stand?" an expression originally referring to the *standing* of the Lombard merchants in the market-place, and which seems to indicate that one's well-being or health depends on his business prosperity. The dreamy,

meditative German, dwelling among abstractions, salutes you with the vague, impersonal, metaphysical, "Wie gehts?"—"How goes it?" Another salutation which he uses is "Wie befinden sie sich?"—literally, "How do they find themselves?" A born philosopher, he is so absent-minded, so lost in thought, that he thinks you cannot tell him of the state of your health till you have searched for and *found* it.

The trading Hollander, who scours the world, asks, "How do you go?" The thoughtful Swede inquires, "How do you think?" The Frenchman, who lives in others' eyes, and is more anxious about appearances than realities,— who has never to hunt himself up like the German, and desires less to *do*, like the Anglo-Saxon, than to be lively, to show himself,—says frankly, "Comment vous portez-vous?"—"How do you carry yourself?" It has been said that a man would be owl-blind, who, in the "Hoo's a' wi' ye?" of the kindly Scot, could not perceive the mixture of national pawkiness with hospitable cordiality. "One sees, in the mind's eye, the canny chield, who would invite you to dinner three days in the week, but who would look twice at your bill before he discounted it." What can be more unmistakably characteristic than the Irish peasant's "Long life to your honor; may you make your bed in glory!" After such a grandiose salute, we need no mouser among the records of antiquity to certify to us that the Hibernian is of Oriental origin, nor do we need any other key to his peculiar vivacity and impressionableness of feeling, his rollicking, daredevil, hyperbole-loving enthusiasm. Finally, of all the national forms of salutation, the most signally characteristic,—the one which reveals the very core, the inmost "heart of heart" of a

people,— is the Englishman's "How do you do?" In these four little monosyllables the activity, the intense practicality of the Englishman, the very quintessence of his character, are revealed as by a lightning's flash. To do! Not to think, to stand, to carry yourself, but to *do*; and this doing is so universal among the English,— its necessity is so completely recognized,— that no one dreams of asking whether you are doing, or what you are doing, but all demand, "*How* do you do?"

It has been well observed by the learned German writer, J. D. Michaelis, that "some virtues are more sedulously cultivated by moralists, when the language has fit names for indicating them; whereas they are but superficially treated of, or rather neglected, in nations where such virtues have not so much as a name. Languages may obviously do injury to morals and religion by their equivocation; by false accessories, inseparable from the principal idea; and by their poverty." It is a striking fact, noted by an English traveler, that the native language of Van Diemen's Land has four words to express the idea of taking life, not one of which indicates the deep-lying distinction between to kill and to murder; while any word for love is wanting to it altogether. One of the most formidable obstacles which Christian missionaries have encountered in teaching the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel to the heathen, has been the absence from their languages of a spiritual and ethical nomenclature. It is in vain that the religious teachers of a people present to them a doctrinal or ethical system inculcating virtues and addressed to faculties, whose very existence their language, and consequently the conscious self-knowledge of the people, do not recognize. The Greeks and Romans, for example, had a clear

conception of a moral ideal, but the Christian idea of *sin* was utterly unknown to the Pagan mind. Vice they regarded as simply a relaxed energy of the will, by which it yielded to the allurements of sensual pleasure; and *vir*tue, literally "manliness," was the determined spirit, the courage and vigor with which it resisted such temptations. But the idea of *holiness* and the antithetic idea of sin were such utter strangers to the Pagan mind that it would have been impossible to express them in either of the classical tongues of antiquity. As De Maistre has strikingly observed, man knew well that he could *irritate* God or *a god,* but not that he could *offend* him. The words *crime* and *criminal* belong to all languages: those of *sin* and *sinner* belong only to the Christian tongue. For a similar reason, man could always call God *father,* which expresses only a relation of creation and of power; but no man, of his own strength, could say *my father!* for this is a relation of love, foreign even to Mount Sinai, and which belongs only to Calvary.

Again the Greek language, as we have already seen, had no term for the Christian virtue of *humility;* and when the apostle Paul coined one for it, he had to employ a root conveying the idea, not of self-abasement before a just and holy God, but of positive debasement and meanness of spirit. On the other hand, there is a word in our own tongue which, as De Quincey observes, cannot be rendered adequately either by German or Greek, the two richest of human languages, and without which we should all be disarmed for one great case, continually recurrent, of social enormity. It is the word *humbug.* "A vast mass of villainy, that cannot otherwise be reached by legal penalties, or brought within the rhetoric of scorn,

would go at large with absolute impunity, were it not through the stern Rhadamanthian aid of this virtuous and inexorable word."

There is no way in which men so often become the victims of error as by an imperfect understanding of certain words which are artfully used by their superiors. Cynicism is seldom shallower than when it sneers at what it contemptuously calls the power of words over the popular imagination. If men are agreed about things, what, it is asked, can be more foolish than to dispute about names? But while it is true that in the physical world things dominate over names, and are not at the mercy of a shifting vocabulary, yet in the world of ideas,—of history, philosophy, ethics, and poetry,—words triumph over things, are even equivalent to things, and are as truly the living organism of thought as the eyes, lips, and entire physiognomy of a man, are the media of the soul's expression. Hence words are the only certain *test* of thought; so much so, that, as one has well said, we often stop short in the midst of an assertion, an exclamation, or a request, startled by the form it assumes in words. Thus, in Shakspeare, King John says to Hubert, who pleaded his sovereign's order for putting the young prince to death, that, if instead of receiving the order in signs,

> "Thou
> Hadst bid me tell my tale *in express words*,
> Deep shame had struck me dumb."

Words are often not only the vehicle of thought, but the very mirror in which we see our ideas, and behold the beauty or ugliness of our inner selves.

A volume might be written on the mutual influence of language and opinion, showing that the opinion we entertain of an object does not more powerfully influence the

mind in applying to it a name or epithet, than the epithet or name influences the opinion. Call thunder "the bolt of God's wrath," and you awaken a feeling of terror; call it, with the German peasant, *das liebe gewitter* (the dear thunder), and you excite a different emotion. As the forms in which we clothe the outward expression of our feelings react with mighty force upon the heart, so our speculative opinions are greatly confirmed or invalidated by the technical terms we employ. Fiery words, it has been truly remarked, are the hot blast that inflames the fuel of our passionate nature, and formulated doctrine a hedge that confines the discursive wanderings of the thoughts. The words that have helped us to conquer the truth, often become the very tyrants of our convictions; and phrases once big with meaning are repeated till they "ossify the very organs of intelligence." False or partial definitions often lead into dangerous errors; an impassioned polemic falls a victim to his own logic, and a wily advocate becomes the dupe of his own rhetoric.

Words, in short, are excellent servants, but the most tyrannical of masters. Some men command them, but a vast majority are commanded by them. There are words which have exercised a more iron rule, swayed with a more despotic power, than Cæsar or the Russian Czar. Often an idle word has conquered a host of facts; and a mistaken theory, embalmed in a widely-received word, has retarded for centuries the progress of knowledge. Thus the protracted opposition in France to the Newtonian theory arose chiefly from the influence of the word "attraction"; the contemptuous misnomer, "Gothic," applied to northern mediæval architecture, perpetuated the dislike with which it was regarded; and the introduction of the term "landed

proprietor" into Bengal, caused a disorganization of society which had never been caused by its most barbarous invaders.

Macaulay, in his "History of England," mentions a circumstance strikingly illustrative of the connection between language and opinion,— that no large society of which the language is not Teutonic has ever turned Protestant, and that wherever a language derived from ancient Rome is spoken, the religion of modern Rome to this day prevails. "Men believe," says Bacon, "that their reason is lord over their words, but it happens, too, that words exercise a reciprocal and reactionary power over the intellect. . . Words, as a Tartar's bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment." Not only every language, but every age, has its charmed words, its necromantic terms, which give to the cunning speaker who knows how to ring the changes upon them, instant access to the hearts of men, as at "Open Sesame!" the doors of the cave flung themselves open to the thieves in the Arabian tale. "There are words," says Balzac, "which, like the trumpets, cymbals, and bass-drums of mountebanks, attract the public; the words 'beauty,' 'glory,' 'poetry,' have witcheries that seduce the grossest minds." At the utterance of the magic names of Austerlitz and Marengo, thousands have rushed to a forlorn hope, and met death at the cannon's mouth.

South, in his eloquent sermons on "The Fatal Imposture and Force of Words," observes that anyone who wishes to manage "the rabble," need never inquire, so long as they have ears to hear, whether they have any understanding whereby to judge. With two or three popular, empty words, well-tuned and humored, he may

whistle them backward and forward, upward and downward, till he is weary; and get upon their backs when he is so. When Cæsar's army mutinied, no argument from interest or reason could persuade them; but upon his addressing them as *Quirites*, the tumult was instantly hushed, and they took that word in payment of all. "In the thirtieth chapter of Isaiah we find some arrived at that pitch of sottishness, and so much in love with their own ruin, as to own plainly and roundly say what they would be at. In the tenth verse, 'Prophesy not unto us,' say they, 'right things, but prophesy to us smooth things.' As if they had said, 'Do but oil the razor for us, and let us alone to cut our own throats.' Such an enchantment is there in words; and so fine a thing does it seem to some to be ruined plausibly, and to be ushered to destruction with panegyric and acclamation: a shameful, though irrefragable argument of the absurd empire and usurpation of words over things; and that the greatest affairs and most important interests of the world are carried on by things, not as they are, but as they are called."

The Romans, after the expulsion of Tarquin, could not brook the idea of being governed by a *king;* yet they submitted to the most abject slavery under an emperor. Cromwell was too sagacious to disgust the republicans by calling himself King, though he doubtless laughed grimly in his sleeve as, under the title of Lord Protector, he exercised all the regal functions. We are told by Saint Simon that at the court of the grand monarch, Louis XIV., gambling was so common that even the ladies took part in it. The gentlemen did not scruple to cheat at cards; but the ladies had a peculiar tenderness on the subject. No lady could for a moment think of retaining

such unrighteous gains; the moment they were touched, they were religiously given away. But then, we must add, the gift was always made to some other winner of her own sex. By carefully avoiding the words "interchange of winnings," the charming casuists avoided all self-reproach, and all sharp censure by their discreet and lenient confessors. There are sects of Christians at the present day that protest vehemently against a hired ministry; yet their preachers must be warmed, fed and clothed by "donation parties,"—like the snob-gentleman in Moliere, whose father was no shop-keeper, but kindly *chose goods* for his friends, which he let them have for — money.

Party and sectarian leaders know that the great secret of the art of swaying the people is to invent a good shibboleth or battle-cry, to be dinned continually in their ears. Persons familiar with British history will remember certain talismanic vocables, such as "Wilkes and Liberty," the bare utterance of which has been sufficient at times to set a whole population in a flame; while the solemn and sepulchral cadences in which Pitt repeated the cuckoo song of "thrones and altars," "anarchy and dissolution of social order," were more potent arguments against revolution than the most perfect syllogism that was ever constructed in mood and figure. So in our own country this verbal magic has been found more convincing than arguments in "Barbara" or "Baralipton." Patriots and demagogues alike have found that it was only necessary, in South's phrase, to take any passion of the people, when it was predominant and just at the critical height of it, "and nick it with some lucky or unlucky word," and they might "as certainly overrule it to their own purpose as a spark of fire, falling upon gunpowder, will infallibly

blow it up." "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights," "No More Compromise," "The Higher Law," "The Irrepressible Conflict," "Squatter Sovereignty," and other similar phrases, have roused and moved the public mind as much as the pulpit and the press.

Gouverneur Morris, in his Parisian journal of 1789, tells an anecdote which strikingly illustrates this influence of catch-words upon the popular mind. A gentleman, in walking, came near to a knot of people whom a street orator was haranguing on the power of a qualified veto (*veto suspensif*) which the constituent assembly had just granted to the king. "Messieurs," said the orator, "we have not a supply of bread. Let me tell you the reason. It has been but three days since the king obtained this qualified veto, and during that time the aristocrats have bought up some of these *suspensions*, and carried the grain out of the kingdom." To this profound discourse the people assented by loud cheers. Not only shibboleths, but epithets, are often more convincing than syllogisms. The term *Utopian* or *Quixotic*, associated in the minds of the people with any measure, even the wisest and most practicable, is as fatal to it as what some one calls the poisonous sting of the American *humbug*.

So in theology; false doctrines and true doctrines have owed their currency or non-currency, in a great measure, to the coinage of happy terms, by which they have been summed up and made attractive or offensive. Trench observes that "the entire secret of Buddhism is in the 'Nĭrvâna.' Take away the word, and it is not too much to say that the keystone to the whole arch is gone." When the Roman Catholic church coined the term "transubstantiation," the error which had so long been held in solution

was precipitated, and became henceforth a fixed and influential dogma. What a potent watchword was the term "Reformation," in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries! Who can estimate the influence of the phrases "Broad Church," "Liberal Church," "Close Communion," in advancing or retarding the growth of certain religious sects at this day? Even the most "advanced thinkers," who reject the supernatural element of the Bible, put all religions upon the same level, and deem Shakspeare as truly inspired as the Apostles, style themselves "Christians."

Even in science happy names have had much to do with the general reception of truth. "Hardly any original thoughts on mental or social subjects," says a writer, "ever make their way among mankind, or assume their proper proportions even in the minds of their inventors, until aptly selected words or phrases have, as it were, nailed them down and held them fast." How much is the study of the beautiful science of botany hindered by such "lexical superfetations" as "chrysanthemum leukanthemum," "Myosotis scorpioeides" (scorpion-shaped mouse's ear); and how much is that of astronomy promoted by such popular terms as "the bear," "the serpent," "the milky way"! How much knowledge is gathered up in the compact and easily remembered phrase, "correlation of forces"; and to what an extent the wide diffusion of Darwin's speculations is owing to two or three felicitous and comprehensive terms, such as "the struggle for existence," "survival of the fittest," "the process of natural selection"! Who that has felt the painfulness of doubt has not desired to know something of "the *positive* philosophy" of Comte? On the other hand, the well-known anatomist, Professor Owen, complains with just reason of the embarrassments produced

in his science by having to use a long description instead of a name. Thus a particular bone is called by Soemmering "pars occipitalis stricte sic dicta partis occipitalis ossis spheno-occipitalis," a description so clumsy that only the direst necessity would lead one to use it.

Even great authors, who are supposed to have "sovereign sway and masterdom" over words, are often bewitched and led captive by them. Thus Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth were bent on establishing their Pantesocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna, not because they knew anything of that locality, but because Susquehanna was "such a *pretty name*." Again, to point an epigram or give edge to a sarcasm, a writer will stab a rising reputation as with a poniard; and even when convicted of misrepresentation, will sooner stick to the lie than part with a *jeu d'esprit*, or forego a verbal felicity. Thus Byron, alluding to Keats's death, which was supposed to have been caused by Gifford's savage criticism in the "Quarterly," said:

> "Strange that the soul, that very fiery particle,
> Should let itself be snuffed out by an article!"

Though he was afterwards informed of the untruth of these lines, Byron, plethoric as he was with poetic wealth and wit, could not willingly let them die; and so the witticism yet remains to mislead and provoke the laughter of his readers.

Again: there are authors who, to meet the necessities of rhyme, or to give music to a period, will pad out their sentences with meaningless expletives. They employ words as carpenters put false windows into houses; not to let in light upon their meaning, but for symmetry. Or, perhaps, they imagine that a certain degree of distension of

the intellectual stomach is required to enable it to act with its full powers,—just as some of the Russian peasantry mix sawdust with the train-oil they drink, or as hay and straw are given to horses, as well as corn, to supply the necessary bulk. Thus Dr. Johnson, imitating Juvenal, says:

> "Let observation, with extensive view,
> Survey mankind from China to Peru."

This, a lynx-eyed critic contended, was equivalent to saying: "Let observation, with extensive observation, observe mankind extensively." If the Spartans, as we are told, fined a citizen because he used three words where two would have done as well, how would they have punished such prodigality of language?

It is an impressive truth which has often been noticed by moralists that indulgence in verbal vice speedily leads to corresponding vices in conduct. If a man talk of any mean, sensual, or criminal practice in a familiar or flippant tone, the delicacy of his moral sense is almost sure to be lessened, he loses his horror of the vice, and, when tempted to do the deed, he is far more likely to yield. Many a man, without dreaming of such a result, has thus talked himself into vice, into sensuality, and even into ruin. "Bad language," says an able divine, "easily runs into bad deeds. Select any iniquity you please; suffer yourself to converse in its dialect, to use its slang, to speak in the character of one who approves or relishes it, and I need not tell you how soon your moral sense may lower down its level." The apostle James was so impressed with the significance of speech that he regarded it as an unerring sign of character. "If any man offend not in word," he declares, "the same is a perfect man, and able

also to bridle the whole body." Again he declares that "the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison"; commenting upon which, Rev. F. W. Robertson observes: "The deadliest poisons are those for which no test is known; there are poisons so destructive that a single drop insinuated into the veins produces death in three seconds. . . In that drop of venom which distils from the sting of the smallest insect or the spikes of the nettle-leaf, there is concentrated the quintessence of a poison so subtle that the microscope cannot distinguish it, and yet so virulent that it can inflame the blood, irritate the whole constitution, and convert night and day into restless misery." So, he adds, there are words of calumny and slander, apparently insignificant, yet so venomous and deadly that they not only inflame hearts and fever human existence, but poison human society at the very fountain springs of life. It was said with the deepest feeling of the utterers of such words, by one who had smarted under their sting: "Adders' poison is under their lips."

Who can estimate the amount of misery which has been produced in society by merely idle words, uttered without malice, and by words uttered in jest? A poet, whose name is unknown to us, has vividly painted the effects of such utterances:

"A frivolous word, a sharp retort,
A flash from a passing cloud,
Two hearts are scathed to their inmost core,
Are ashes and dust forevermore;
Two faces turn to the crowd,
Masked by pride with a lifelong lie,
To hide the scars of that agony.

"A frivolous word, a sharp retort,
An arrow at random sped;
It has cut in twain the mystic tie

That had bound two souls in harmony,
Sweet love lies bleeding or dead.
A poisoned shaft with scarce an aim,
Has done a mischief sad as shame."

It was one of the virtues of George Washington that he knew how to be silent. John Adams said he had the most remarkable mouth he had ever seen; for he had the art of controlling his lips. One of the rules of conduct to which David Hume inflexibly adhered, was never to reply to any attack made upon him or his writings. It was creditable to him that he had no anxiety to have "the last word,"—that which in family circles has been pronounced to be "the most dangerous of infernal machines."

It is not, however, in the realm of literature and morals only that the power of words is seen. Who is ignorant of their sway in the world of politics? Is not fluency of speech, in many communities, more than statesmanship? Are not brains, with a little tongue, often far less potent than "tongue with a garnish of brains"? Need any one be told that a talent for speech-making has stood in place of all other acquirements; that it is this which has made judges without law, and diplomatists without French; which has sent to the army brigadiers who knew not a cannon from a mortar, and to the legislature men who could not tell a bank-note from a bill of exchange; which, according to Macaulay, made a Foreign Minister of Mr. Pitt, who never opened Vattel, and which was near making a Chancellor of the Exchequer of Mr. Sheridan, who could not work a sum in long division? "To be a man of the world," says Corporal Bunting, a character in one of Bulwer's novels, "you must know all the ins and outs of speechifying. It's words that make another man's mare go your road. Augh! that must have been a clever man as invented

language. It is a marvel to think how much a man does in the way of cheating, if he only has the gift of the gab; wants a missus,— talks her over; wants your horse,— talks you out of it; wants a place,— talks himself into it. . . Words make even them 'ere authors, poor creatures, in every man's mouth. Augh! sir, take note of the *words*, and the things will take care of themselves."

It is true that "lying words" are not always responsible for the mischief they do; that they often rebel and growl audibly against the service into which they are pressed, and testify against their task-masters. The latent nature of a man struggles often through his own words, so that even truth itself comes blasted from his lips, and vulgarity, malignity, and littleness of soul, however anxiously cloaked, are betrayed by the very phrases and images of their opposites. "A satanic drop in the blood," it has been said, "makes a clergyman preach diabolism from scriptural texts, and a philanthropist thunder hate from the rostrum of reform." * But though the truth often leaks out through the most hypocritical words, it is yet true that they are successfully employed, as decoy-ducks, to deceive, and the dupes who are cheated by them are legion. There are men fond of abstractions, whom words seem to enter and take possession of, as their lords and owners. Blind to every shape but a shadow, deaf to every sound but an echo, they invert the legitimate order, and regard things as the symbols of words, not words as the symbols of things. There is, in short, "a besotting intoxication which this verbal magic, if I may so call it, brings upon the mind of man. . . Words are able to persuade men out of what they find and feel, to reverse the very impressions of sense, and to amuse

* "Literature and Life," by Edwin P. Whipple.

men with fancies and paradoxes, even in spite of nature and experience." *

All who are familiar with Dickens will recollect the reply of the shrewd Samuel Weller, when asked the meaning of the word monomania: "When a *poor* fellow takes a piece of goods from a shop, it is called theft; but if a wealthy lady does the same thing, it is called *monomania*." There is biting satire as well as *naïveté* and dry humor in the reply, and it strikingly shows the moral power of language; how the same act may be made to appear in wholly different lights, according to the phraseology used to describe it. The same character may be made to look as spotless as an angel, or as black as "the sooty spirits that troop under Acheron's flag," through the lubricity of language. "*Timidus*, says Seneca, "*se cautum vocat; sordidus, parcum.*" Thousands who would shrink back with disgust or horror from a vice which has an ugly name, are led "first to endure, then pity, then embrace," when men have thrown over it the mantle of an honorable appellation. A singular but most instructive dictionary might be compiled by taking one after another the honorable and the sacred words of a language, and showing for what infamies, basenesses, crimes, or follies, each has been made a pretext. Is there no meaning in the fact that, among the ancient Romans, the same word was employed to designate a crime and a great action, and that a softened expression for "a thief" was "a man of three letters" (f. u. r.)? Does it make no difference in our estimate of the gambler and his profession, whether we call him by the plain, unvarnished Saxon "blackleg," or by the French epithet, "industrious chevalier"? Can any one doubt that in Italy, when poisoning was rifest, the crime

* South's Sermons.

was fearfully increased by the fact that, in place of this term, not to be breathed in ears polite, the death of someone was said to be "assisted"? Or can any one doubt the moral effect of a similar perversion of words in France, when a subtle poison, by which impatient heirs delivered themselves from persons who stood between them and the inheritance they coveted, was called "succession powder"?

Juvenal indignantly denounces the polished Romans for relieving the consciences of rich criminals by softening the names of their crimes; and Thucydides, in a well-known passage of his history, tells how the morals of the Greeks of his day were sapped, and how they concealed the national deterioration, by perversions of the customary meanings of words. Unreasoning rashness, he says, passed as "manliness" and "esprit de corps," and prudent caution for specious cowardice; sobermindedness was a mere "cloak for effeminacy," and general prudence was "inefficient inertness." The Athenians, at one time, were adepts in the art of coining agreeable names for disagreeable things. "Taxes" they called "subscriptions" or "contributions"; the prison was "the house"; the executioner a "public servant"; and a general abolition of debt was "a disburdening ordinance." Devices like these are common to all countries; and in our own, especially, one is startled to see what an amount of ingenuity has been expended in perfecting this "devil's vocabulary," and how successful the press has been in its efforts to transmute acts of wickedness into mere peccadilloes, and to empty words employed in the condemnation of evil, of the depth and earnestness of the moral reprobation they convey.

Some time ago a Wisconsin clergyman, being detected in stealing books from a bookstore, confessed the truth,

and added that he left his former home in New Jersey under disgrace for a similar theft. This fact a New York paper noted under the head of "A Peculiar Misfortune." About the same time a clerk in Richmond, Va., being sent to deposit several hundreds of dollars in a bank, ran away with the money to the North. Having been pursued, overtaken, and compelled to return the money, he was spoken of by "the chivalry" as the young man "who had lately *met with an accident*." Is it not an alarming sign of the times, when, in the Legislature of one of our largest Eastern States, a member declares that he has been asked by another member for his vote, and told that he would get "five hundred *reasons* for giving it"; thus making the highest word in our language, that which signifies divinely-given power of discrimination and choice, the synonyme of bribery?

Perhaps no honorable term in the language has been more debased than "gentleman." Originally the word meant a man born of a noble family, or *gens*, as the Romans called it; but as such persons were usually possessed of wealth and leisure, they were generally distinguished by greater refinement of manners than the working classes, and a more tasteful dress. As in the course of ages their riches and legal privileges diminished, and the gulf which separated them from the citizens of the trading towns was bridged by the increasing wealth and power of the latter, the term "gentleman" came at last to denote indiscriminately all persons who kept up the state and observed the social forms which had once characterized men of rank. To-day the term has sunk so low that the acutest lexicographer would be puzzled to tell its meaning. Not only does every person of decent exterior and deportment as-

sume to be a gentleman, but the term is applied to the vilest criminals and the most contemptible miscreants, as well as to the poorest and most illiterate persons in the community.

In aristocratic England the artificial distinctions of society have so far disappeared that even the porter who lounges in his big chair, and condescends to show you out, is "the gentleman in the hall"; Jeames is the "gentleman in uniform"; while the valet is the "gentleman's gentleman." Even a half a century ago, George IV., who was so ignorant that he could hardly spell, and who in heart and soul was a thorough snob, was pronounced, upon the ground of his grand and suave manners, "the first gentleman of Europe." But in the United States the term has been so emptied of its original meaning,— especially in some of the Southern States, where society has hardly emerged from a feudal state, and where men who shoot each other in a street fray still babble of being "born gentlemen," and of "dying like gentlemen,"— that most persons will think it is quite time for the abolition of "that heartless conventionality, that absurd humbug and barbarian, the gentleman." Cowper declared, a hundred years ago, in regard to duelling:

> "A gentleman
> Will not insult me, and no other can."

A Southern newspaper stated some years ago that a "gentleman" was praising the town of Woodville, Mississippi, and remarked that "it was the most quiet, peaceable place he ever saw; there was no quarrelling or rowdyism, no fighting about the streets. If a *gentleman* insulted another, he was *quietly shot down*, and there was the last of it." The gentle Isaiah Rynders, who acted as Marshal at

the time the pirate Hicks was executed in New York, had doubtless similar notions of gentility; for, after conversing a moment with the culprit, he said to the bystanders: "I asked the *gentleman* if he desired to address the audience, but he declined." In a similar spirit Booth, the assassin, when he was surrounded in the barn, where he was shot like a beast, offered to pledge his word "as a *gentleman*," to come out and try to shoot one or two of his captors. The Duke of Saxe-Weimar states that when he visited the United States about fifty years ago, he was asked by a hackman: "Are you the *man* that's going to ride with me; for I am the *gentleman* that's to drive?"

When a young man becomes a reckless spendthrift, how easy it is to gloss over his folly by talking of his "generosity," his "big-heartedness," and "contempt for trifles"; or, if he runs into the opposite vice of miserly niggardliness, how convenient to dignify it by the terms "economy" and "wise forecast of the future"! A man with a good income becomes extravagant in his expenditures, and contracts hundreds of debts, which he fails to liquidate, for fine furniture and clothes, fast horses and champagne suppers; or, perhaps, he deliberately fails in business, and swindles his victims out of fifty or a hundred thousand dollars: who, even of the sufferers, can be so cruel as to pronounce him a "scoundrel," when he was manifestly only "a little fast," or there was merely "a confusion in his affairs"?

Many a man has blown out another's brains in "an affair of honor," who, if accused of murder, would have started back with horror. Many a person stakes his all on a public stock, or sells wheat or corn which he does not possess, in the expectation of a speedy fall, who would

be thunderstruck if told that, while considering himself only a shrewd speculator, he was, in everything save decency of appearance, on a par with the haunter of a "hell," and as much a gambler as if he were staking his money on "rouge-et-noir" or "roulette." Hundreds of officials have been tempted to defraud the government by the fact that the harshest term applied to the offense is the rose-water one, "defaulting"; and men have plotted without compunction the downfall of the government, and plundered its treasury, as "secessionists," who would have expected to dangle at the rope's end, or to be shot down like dogs, had they regarded themselves as rebels or traitors. So Pistol objected to the odious word *steal* — "*convey*, the wise it call." There are multitudes of persons who can sit for hours at a festive table, gorging themselves, Gargantua-like, "with links and chitterlings," and guzzling whole bottles of champagne, under the impression that they are "jolly fellows," "true epicureans," and "connoisseurs in good living," whose cheeks would tingle with indignation and shame if they were accused, in point-blank terms, of vices so disgusting as intemperance or gluttony. "I am not a slut," boasts Audrey, in "As You Like It," "though I thank the gods I am foul."

Of all classes of men whose callings tempt them to juggle with words, none better than auctioneers understand how much significance lies in certain shades of expression. It is told of Robins, the famous London auctioneer, who in selling his wares revelled in an oriental luxury of expression, that in puffing an estate he described a certain ancient gallows as "a hanging wood." At another time, having made the beauties of the earthly paradise which he was commissioned to sell too gorgeously

enchanting, and finding it necessary to blur it by a fault or two, lest it should prove "too good for human nature's daily food, the Hafiz of the mart paused a moment, and reluctantly added: "But candor compels me to add, gentlemen, that there are two drawbacks to this splendid property,—*the litter of the rose-leaves and the noise of the nightingales.*"

It is hardly possible to estimate the mischief which is done to society by the debasement of its language in the various ways we have indicated. When the only words we have by which to designate the personifications of nobleness, manliness, courtesy and truth are systematically applied to all that is contemptible and vile, who can doubt that these high qualities themselves will ultimately share in the debasement to which their proper names are subjected? Who does not see how vast a difference it must make in our estimate of any species of wickedness, whether we are wont to designate it, and to hear it designated, by some word which brings out its hatefulness, or by one which palliates and glosses over its foulness and deformity? How much better to characterize an ugly thing by an ugly word, that expresses moral condemnation and disgust, even at the expense of some coarseness, than to call evil good and good evil, to put darkness for light, and light for darkness, by the use of a term that throws a veil of sentiment over a sin? In reading the literature of former days, we are shocked occasionally by the bluntness and plain-speaking of our fathers; but even their coarsest terms,—the "naked words, stript from their shirts,"—in which they denounced libertinism, were far less hurtful than the ceremonious delicacy which has taught men to abuse each other with the ut-

most politeness, to hide the loathsomeness of vice, and to express the most indecent ideas in the most modest terms.

It has been justly said that the corrupter of a language stabs straight at the very heart of his country. He commits a crime against every individual of a nation, for he poisons a stream from which all must drink; and the poison is more subtle and more dangerous, because more likely to escape detection, than the deadliest venom with which the destructive philosophy of our day is assailing the moral or the religious interests of humanity. "Let the words of a country," says Milton in a letter to an Italian scholar, "be in part unhandsome and offensive in themselves, in part debased by wear and wrongly uttered, and what do they declare but, by no light indication, that the inhabitants of that country are an indolent, idly-yawning race, with minds already long prepared for any amount of servility?"

Sometimes the spirit which governs employers or employed, and other classes of men, in their mutual relations, is indicated by the names they give each other. Some years ago the Legislature of Massachusetts made a law requiring that children of a certain age employed in the factories of that State, should be sent to school a certain number of weeks in the year. While visiting the factories to ascertain whether this wise provision of the State government was complied with, an officer of the State inquired of the agent of one of the principal factories at New Bedford, whether it was the custom to do anything for the physical, intellectual, or moral welfare of the work-people. The answer would not have been out of place in the master of a plantation, or the captain of a coolie ship: "We never do; as for myself, I regard my work-people

as I regard *my machinery*. . . They must look out for *themselves*, as I do for *myself*. When my machinery gets old and useless, I reject it and get new; and these people are a part of my machinery." Another agent in another part of the State replied to a similar question: "That he used his mill-hands *as he used his horse;* as long as he was in good condition and rendered good service, he treated him well; otherwise he got rid of him as soon as he could, and what became of him afterward was no affair of his."

But we need not multiply illustrations to show the moral power of words. As the eloquent James Martineau says: "Power they certainly have. They are alive with sweetness, with terror, with pity. They have eyes to look at you with strangeness or with response. They are even creative, and can wrap a world in darkness for us, or flood it with light. But in all this, they are not signs of the weakness of humanity; they are the very crown and blossom of its supreme strength; and the poet whom this faith possesses will, to the end of time, be master of the critic whom it deserts. The whole inner life of men moulds the forms of language, and is moulded by them in turn; and as surely pines when they are rudely treated as the plant whose vessels you bruise or try to replace with artificial tubes. The grouping of thought, the musical scale of feeling, the shading and harmonies of color in the spectrum of imagination, have all been building, as it were, the molecules of speech into their service; and if you heedlessly alter its dispositions, pulverize its crystals, fix its elastic media, and turn its transparent into opaque, you not only disturb expression, you dislodge the very things to be expressed. And in proportion as the idea or sentiment thus turned adrift is less of a mere personal char-

acteristic, and has been gathering and shaping its elements from ages of various affection and experience, does it become less possible to replace it by any equivalents, or dispense with its function by any act of will."

To conclude: there is one startling fact connected with words, which should make all men ponder what they utter. Not only is every wise and every idle word recorded in the book of divine remembrance, but modern science has shown that they produce an abiding impression on the globe we inhabit. The pulsations of the air, once set in motion, never cease; its waves, raised by each sound, travel the entire round of earth's and ocean's surface; and, in less than twenty-four hours, every atom of atmosphere takes up the altered movement resulting from that sound. The air itself is one vast library, on whose pages are written in imperishable characters all that man has spoken, or even whispered. Not a word that goes from the lips into the air can ever die, until the atmosphere which wraps our huge globe in its embrace has passed away forever, and the heavens are no more. There, till the heavens are rolled together as a scroll, will still live the jests of the profane, the curses of the ungodly, the scoffs of the atheist, "keeping company with the hours," and circling the earth with the song of Miriam, the wailing of Jeremiah, the low prayer of Stephen, the thunders of Demosthenes, and the denunciations of Burke.

"Words are mighty, words are living;
Serpents, with their venomous stings,
Or, bright angels, crowding round us
With heaven's light upon their wings;
Every word has its own spirit,
True or false, that never dies:
Every word man's lips have uttered
Echoes in God's skies."

CHAPTER III.

GRAND WORDS.

The fool hath planted his memory with an army of words.—SHAKSPEARE.

In the commerce of speech use only coin of gold and silver. . . Be profound with clear terms, and not with obscure terms.—JOUBERT.

I observe that all distinguished poetry is written in the oldest and simplest English words. There is a point, above coarseness and below refinement, where propriety abides.—EMERSON.

Never be grandiloquent when you want to drive home a searching truth. Don't whip with a switch that has the leaves on, if you want to tingle.—H. W. BEECHER.

Let, then, clerks enditen in Latin, for they have the property of science and the knowledge in that faculty: and let Frenchmen in their French, also, enditen their quaint terms, for it is kindly to their mouths; and let us show our fantasies in such words as we learneden of our dame's tongue.—CHAUCER.

IT is a trite remark that words are the representatives of things and thoughts, as coin represents wealth. You carry in your pocket a doubloon or a dollar, stamped by the king or state, and you are the virtual owner of whatever it will purchase. But who affixes the stamp upon a word? No prince or potentate was ever strong enough to make or unmake a single word. Cæsar confessed that with all his power he could not do it, and Claudius could not introduce even a new letter. Cicero tried his hand at it; but though he proved himself a skillful mint-master, and struck some admirable trial-pieces, which were absolutely needed to facilitate mental exchanges, yet they did not gain circulation, and were thrown back upon his hands. But that which defied the power of Cæsar and of Cicero does not transcend the ability of many writers of our own day, some

of whom are adepts in the art of word-coining, and are daily minting terms and phrases which must make even Noah Webster, boundless as was his charity for new words, turn in his grave. It is doubtful, however, whether these persons do so much damage to our noble English language as those who vulgarize it by the use of penny-a-liner phrases. There is a large and growing class of speakers and writers, on both sides of the Atlantic, who, apparently despising the homely but terse and telling words of their mother tongue, never use a Saxon term, if they can find what Lord Brougham calls a "long-tailed word in *'osity* or *'ation*" to do its work.

What is the cause of this? Is it the extraordinary, not to say excessive, attention now given by persons of all ages to foreign languages, to the neglect of our own? Is it the comparative inattention given to correct diction by the teachers in the schools of to-day; or is it because the favorite books of the young are sensational stories, made pungent, and in a sense, natural, through the lavish use of all the colloquialisms and vulgarisms of low life? Shall we believe that it is because there is little individuality and independence in these days, that the words of so few persons are flavored with their idiosyncrasies; that it is from conscious poverty of thought, that they try to trick out their ideas in glittering words and phrases, just as by means of high-heeled boots, a laced coat, and a long feather, a fellow with a little soul and a weak body might try to pass muster as a bold grenadier? Or, again, is it because of the prevalent mania for the sensational,— the craving for novelty and excitement, which is almost universal in these days,— that so many persons make sense subservient to sound, and avoid calling things by their proper names?

Was Talleyrand wrong when he said that language was given to man to conceal his thought; and was it really given to hide his want of thought? Is it, indeed, the main object of expression to convey the smallest possible amount of meaning with the greatest possible amount of appearance of meaning; and since nobody can be "so wise as Thurlow looked," to look as wise as Thurlow while uttering the veriest truisms?

Be all this as it may, in nothing else is the lack of simplicity, which is so characteristic of our times, more marked than in the prevailing forms of expression. "The curse and the peril of language in our day, and particularly in this country," says an American critic, who may, perhaps, croak at times, but who has done much good service as a literary policeman in the repression of verbal licentiousness,—"is that it is at the mercy of men who, instead of being content to use it well, according to their honest ignorance, use it ill according to their affected knowledge; who, being vulgar, would seem elegant; who, being empty, would seem full; who make up in pretence what they lack in reality; and whose little thoughts let off in enormous phrases, sound like fire-crackers in an empty barrel." In the estimation of many writers at the present day, the great, crowning vice in the use of words is, apparently, to employ plain, straightforward English. The simple Saxon is not good enough for their purposes, and so they array their ideas in "big, dictionary words," derived from the Latin, and load their style with expletives as tasteless as the streamers of tattered finery that flutter about the person of a dilapidated belle. The "high-polite," in short, is their favorite style, and the good old Spartan rule of calling a spade a spade they hold in thorough contempt. Their great

recipe for elegant or powerful writing is to call the most common things by the most uncommon names. Provided that a word is out-of-the-way, unusual, or far-fetched,—and especially if it is one of many syllables,—they care little whether it is apt and fit or not.

With them a fire is always "the devouring element;" it never burns a house, but it always "consumes an edifice," unless it is got under, in which case "its progress is arrested." A railroad accident is always "a holocaust," and its victims are named under the "death-roll." A man who is the first to do a thing "takes the initiative." Instead of loving a woman, a man "becomes attached" to her; instead of losing his mother by death, he "sustains a bereavement of his maternal relative." A dog's tail, in the pages of these writers, is his "caudal appendage"; a dog-breaker, "a kunopædist"; and a fish-pond they call by no less lofty a title than "piscine preserve." Ladies, in their classic pages, have ceased to be married, like those poor, vulgar creatures, their grandmothers,—they are "led to the hymeneal altar." Of the existence of such persons as a man, a woman, a boy or a girl, these writers are profoundly ignorant; though they often speak of "individuals," "gentlemen," "characters," and "parties," and often recognize the existence of "juveniles" and "juvenile members of the community." "Individual" is another piece of "pompous inanity" which is very current now. In "Guesses at Truth" mention is made of a celebrated preacher, who was so destitute of all feeling for decorum in language, as to call our Saviour "this eminent *individual*." "Individual" is a good Latin word, and serves a good purpose when it distinguishes a person from a people or class, as it served a good purpose in the scholastic philosophy; but would

Cicero or Duns Scotus have called a great man an *eminens individuum?* These "individuals," strange to say, are never dressed, but always "attired"; they never take off their clothes, but "divest themselves of their habiliments," which is so much grander.

Again: the Anti-Saxons, if we may so call them, never tell us that a man was asleep, but say that he was "locked in slumber"; they deem it vulgar, and perhaps cruel, to say that a criminal was hanged; but very elegant to say that he was "launched into eternity." A person of their acquaintance never does so low a thing as to break his leg; he "fractures his limb." They never see a man fall; but sometimes see "an individual precipitated." Our Latin friends,— fortunate souls,— never have their feelings hurt, though it must be confessed that their "sensibilities" are sometimes dreadfully "lacerated." Above the necessities of their poor fellow-creatures, they never do so vulgar a thing as to eat a meal; they always "partake of a repast," which is so much more elegant. They never do so commonplace a thing as to take a walk; they "make a pedestrian excursion." A conjurer with them is a "prestidigitator"; a fortune-teller, a "vaticinator." As Pascal says, they mask all nature. There is with them no king, but an "august monarch"; no Paris, but a "capital of a kingdom." Even our barbers have got upon stilts. They no longer sell tooth-powder and shaving-soap, like the old fogies, their fathers, but "odonto," and "dentifrice," and "rypophagon"; and they themselves, from the barber-ous persons they once were, have been transformed into "*artists* in hair." The medical faculty, too, have caught the spirit of the age. Who would suspect that "epistaxis" means simply bleeding at the nose, and "emollient cataplasm" only a poul-

tice? Fancy one school-boy doubling up his fist at another, and telling him to look out for epistaxis! Who would dream that "anheidro-hepseterion" (advertised in the London "Times") means only a saucepan, or "taxidermist" a bird-stuffer? Is it not remarkable that tradesmen have ceased "sending in" their "little bills," and now only "render their accounts"?

"There are people," says Landor, "who think they write and speak finely, merely because they have forgotten the language in which their fathers and mothers used to talk to them." As in dress, deportment, etc., so in language, the dread of vulgarity, as Whately has suggested, constantly besetting those who are half conscious that they are in danger of it, drives them into the opposite extreme of affected finery. They act upon the advice of Boileau:

> "Quoique vous écriviez, évitez la bassesse;
> Le style le moins noble a pourtant sa noblesse;"

and, to avoid the undignified, according to them, it is only necessary not to call things by their right names.

Such persons forget that glass will obstruct the light quite as much when beautifully painted as when discolored with dirt; and that a style studded with far-fetched epithets and high-sounding phrases may be as dark as one abounding in colloquial vulgarisms. Who does not sympathize with the indignation of Dr. Johnson, when, taking up at the house of a country friend a so-called "Liberal Translation of the New Testament," he read, in the eleventh chapter of John, instead of the simple and touching words, "Jesus wept,"—"Jesus, the Saviour of the world, overcome with grief, burst into a flood of tears"? "*Puppy!*" exclaimed the critic, as he threw down the book in a rage; and had the author been pres-

ent, Johnson would doubtless have thrown it at his head. Yet the great literary bashaw, while he had an eagle's eye for the faults of others, was unconscious of his own sins against simplicity, and, though he spoke like a wit, too often wrote like a pedant. He had, in fact, a dialect of his own, which has been wittily styled *Johnsonese*. Goldsmith hit him in a vulnerable spot when he said: "Doctor, if you were to write a fable about little fishes, you would make them talk like whales." The faults of his pompous, swelling diction, in which the frivolity of a coxcomb is described in the same rolling periods and with the same gravity of antithesis with which he would thunder against rebellion or fanaticism, are hardly exaggerated by a wit of his own time who calls it

> "a turgid style,
> Which gives to an inch the importance of a mile;
> Uplifts the club of Hercules — for what?
> To crush a butterfly, or brain a gnat;
> Bids ocean labor with tremendous roar,
> To heave a cockle-shell upon the shore;
> Sets wheels on wheels in motion,—what a clatter!
> To force up one poor nipperkin of water;
> Alike in every theme his pompous art,
> Heaven's awful thunder, or a rumbling cart."

One of the latest "modern improvements" in speech is the substitution of "lady" and "female" for the good old English "woman." On the front of Cooper's Reading-Room, in the city of New York, is the sign in golden letters, "Male and Female Reading-Rooms." Suppose Scott, in his noble tribute to women for their devotion and tenderness to men in the hour of suffering, had sung

> "Oh, LADIES, in our hours of ease," etc.,

would not the lines have been far more touching? An English writer says truly that the law of euphemisms is

somewhat capricious; "one cannot always tell which words are decent and which are not. . . It really seems as if the old-fashioned feminine of 'man' were fast getting proscribed. We, undiscerning male creatures that we are, might have thought that 'woman' was a more elegant and more distinctive title than 'female.' We read only the other day a report of a lecture on the poet Crabbe, in which she who was afterwards Mrs. Crabbe was spoken of as 'a female to whom he had formed an attachment.' To us, indeed, it seems that a man's wife should be spoken of in some way which is not equally applicable to a ewe lamb or a favorite mare. But it was a 'female' who delivered the lecture, and we suppose the females know best about their own affairs."

Can any person account for the apparent antipathy which many writers and speakers have to the good Saxon verb "to begin"? Ninety-nine out of every hundred persons one talks with are sure to prefer the French words "to commence" and "to essay," and the tendency is strong to prefer "to inaugurate" to either. Nothing in our day is begun, not even dinner; it is "inaugurated with soup." In their fondness for the French words, many persons are betrayed into solecisms. Forgetting, or not knowing, that, while "to begin" may be followed by an infinitive or a gerund, "to commence" is transitive, and must be followed by a noun or its equivalent, they talk of "commencing to do" a thing, "essaying to do well," etc. Persons who think that "begin" is not stately enough, or that it is even vulgar, would do well to look into the pages of Milton and Shakspeare. With all his fondness for Romanic words the former hardly once uses "commence" and "commencement"; and the latter is not only content with

the idiomatic word, but even shortens it, as in the well-known line that depicts so vividly the guilt-wasted soul of Macbeth:

"I 'gin to grow a-weary of the sun."

What a shock would every right-minded reader receive, if, upon opening his Bible, he should find, in place of the old familiar words, the following: "In the *commencement* God created the heavens and the earth,"—"The fear of the Lord is the *commencement* of wisdom." Well did Coleridge say: "Intense study of the Bible will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of style." "Commence" is a good word enough, but, being of outlandish origin, should never take the place of "begin," except for the sake of rhythm or variety.

Another of these grand words is "imbroglio." It is from the Italian, and means an intricate or complicated plot. Why, then, should a quarrel in the Cabinet at Washington, or a prospective quarrel with France or England, be called an "imbroglio"? Again, will any one explain to us the meaning of "interpellation," so often used by the correspondents of our daily newspapers? The word properly means an interruption; yet when an opposition member of the French or Italian Parliament asks a question of a minister, he is said "to put an interpellation." Why should an army be said to be "decimated," without regard to the number or nature of its losses? Why, again, should "donate" be preferred to "give"? Does it show a larger soul, a more magnificent liberality, to "donate" than to give? Must we "*donate* the devil his due," when we would be unusually charitable? Why should "elect" be preferred to "choose," when there is no election whatever; or why is "balance" preferable to "re-

mainder"? As a writer has well said: "Would any man in his senses dare to quote King David as saying: 'They are full of children, and leave the *balance* of their substance unto their babes'? or read, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the *balance* of wrath thou shalt restrain,' where the translators of our Bible wrote 'the remainder'? And if any one went into the nursery, and telling that tale of perennial interest of the little boys that a-sliding went, a-sliding went, a-sliding went, all on a summer's day, should, after recounting how they all fell in, they all fell in, they all fell in, add 'the *balance* ran away,' would there not go up a chorus of tiny but indignant protests against this mutilation, which would enlist a far wider sympathy than some of the proposed changes in the texts of classic authors which have set editors and commentators at loggerheads?"

Again: why should one say "rendition" for performance, "enactment" for acting, or "nude" for naked? In the seventeenth century, certain fanatics in England ran about without clothes, crying: "We are the naked Truth." Had they lived in this age of refinement, instead of shocking their countrymen with such indelicate expressions, they would have said, "We are Verity in a nude condition"; and had any person clothed them, he would have been said to have "rehabilitated" them. More offensive than any of these grandiose words is "intoxicated" in place of drunk, which it has nearly banished. A man can be intoxicated only when he has lost his wits, not by quantity, but by quality,—by drinking liquor that has been drugged. "Intoxicated," however, has five syllables; drunk has but one; so the former carries the day by five to one. No doubt nine-tenths of those who drink to excess in this

country are, in fact, intoxicated or poisoned; still, the two words should not be confounded.

Solomon tells us that there is nothing new under the sun; and this itching for pompous forms of expression,— this contempt for plainness and simplicity of style,— is as old as Aristotle. In the third book of his Rhetoric, discussing the causes of frigidity of style, he speaks of one Alcidamas, a writer of that time, as "employing ornaments, not as seasonings to discourse, but as if they were the only food to live upon. He does not say 'sweat,' but 'the humid sweat;' a man goes not to the Isthmian games, but to 'the collected assembly of the Isthmian solemnity'; laws are 'the legitimate kings of commonwealths'; and a race, 'the incursive impulse of the soul.' A rich man is not bountiful, but the 'artificer of universal largess.'" Is it not curious that our modern refiners of language, who often pride themselves upon their taste for swelling words and phrases, and their skill in using them, should have been anticipated by Alcidamas two thousand years ago?

The abuse of the Queen's English to which we have called attention, did not begin with Americans. It began with our trans-Atlantic cousins, who employed "ink-horn" terms and outlandish phrases at a very early period. In "Harrison's Chronicle" we are told that after the Norman Conquest "the English tongue grew into such contempt at court that most men thought it no small dishonor to speak any English there; which bravery took his hold at the last likewise in the country with every plowman, that even the very carters began to wax weary of their mother-tongue, and labored to speak French, which was then counted no small token of gentility."

The English people of to-day are quite as much addicted

to the grandiose style as the Americans. Gough, in one of his lectures, speaks of a card which he saw in London, in which a man called himself "Illuminating artist to Her Majesty," the fact being that he lighted the gas-lamps near the palace. Mr. E. A. Freeman, the English historian, complained in a recent lecture that our language had few friends and many foes, its only friends being plow-boys and a few scholars. The pleasant old "inns" of England, he said, had disappeared, their places being supplied by "hotels," or "establishments"; while the landlord had made way for the "lessee of the establishment." A gentleman going into a shop in Regent street to buy half-mourning goods, was referred by the shopman to "the mitigated affliction department." The besetting sin of some of the ablest British writers of this century is their lack of simplicity of language. Sydney Smith said of Sir James Mackintosh, that if he were asked for a definition of "pepper," he would reply thus: "Pepper may philosophically be described as a dusty and highly pulverized seed of an oriental fruit; an article rather of condiment than diet, which, dispersed lightly over the surface of food, with no other rule than the caprice of the consumer, communicates pleasure, rather than affords nutrition; and by adding a tropical flavor to the gross and succulent viands of the north, approximates the different regions of the earth, explains the objects of commerce, and justifies the industry of man."

Francis Jeffrey, the celebrated critic, had, even in conversation, an artificial style and language, which were fit only for books and a small circle of learned friends. His diction and pronunciation, it is said, were unintelligible to the mass of his countrymen, and in the House of Commons

offensive and ridiculous. An anecdote told in illustration of this peculiarity strikingly shows the superiority of simple to high-flown language in the practical business of life. In a trial, which turned upon the intellectual competency of a testator, Jeffrey asked a witness, a plain countryman, whether the testator was "a man of intellectual capacity," —"an intelligent, shrewd man,"—"a man of capacity?" "Had he ordinary mental endowments?" "What d'ye mean, sir"? asked the witness. "I mean," replied Jeffrey, testily, "was the man of sufficient ordinary intelligence to qualify him to manage his own affairs?" "I dinna ken," replied the chafed and mystified witness,—"Wad ye say the question ower again, sir?" Jeffrey being baffled, Cockburn took up the examination. He said: "Ye kenned Tammas ———?" "Ou, ay; I kenned Tammas weel; me and him herded together when we were laddies (boys)." "Was there onything in the cretur?" "De'il a thing but what the spune (spoon) put into him." "Would you have trusted him to sell a cow for you?" "A cow! I wadna lippened (trusted) him to sell a calf." Had Jeffrey devoted a review article to the subject, he could not have given a more vivid idea of the testator's incapacity to manage his own affairs.

Our readers need not be told how much Carlyle has done to Teutonize our language with his "yardlongtailed" German compounds. It was a just stroke of criticism when a New York auctioneer introduced a miscellaneous lot of books to a crowd with the remark: "Gentlemen, of this lot I need only say, six volumes are by Thomas Carlyle; the seventh is written in the *English* language." Some years ago, a learned doctor of divinity and university professor in Canada wrote a work in which, wishing to state the

simple fact that the "rude Indian" had learned the use of firing, he delivered himself as follows: "He had made slave of the heaven-born element, the brother of the lightning, the grand alchemist and artificer of all times, though as yet he knew not all the worth or magical power that was in him. By his means the sturdy oak, which flung abroad its stalwart arms and waved its leafy honors defiant in the forest, was made to bow to the behest of the simple aborigines." As the plain Scotch-woman said of De Quincey, "the bodie has an awfu' sicht o' words!" This style of speaking and writing has become so common that it can no longer be considered wholly vulgar. It is gradually working upward; it is making its way into official writings and grave octavos; and is even spoken with unction in pulpits and senates. Metaphysicians are wont to define words as the signs of ideas; but, with many persons, they appear to be, not so much the signs of their thought, as the signs of the signs of their thought. Such, doubtless, was the case with the Scotch clergyman, whom a bonneted abhorrer of legal preaching was overheard eulogizing: "Man, John, wasna yon preachin'! — yon 's something for a body to come awa wi'. The way that he smashed down his text into so mony heads and particulars, just a' to flinders! Nine heads and twenty particulars in ilka head — and *sic mouthfu's o' grand words!* — an' every ane o' them fu' o' meaning, if we but kent them. We hae ill improved our opportunities; — man, if we could just mind onything he said, it would do us guid."

The whole literature of notices, handbills, and advertisements, in our day, has apparently declared "war to the knife," against every trace of the Angles, Jutes and Saxons. We have no schoolmasters now; they are all

"principals of collegiate institutes"; no copy-books, but "specimens of caligraphy"; no ink, but "writing-fluid"; no physical exercise, but Calisthenics or Gymnastics. A man who opens a groggery at some corner for the gratification of drunkards, instead of announcing his enterprise by its real name, modestly proclaims through the daily papers that his *saloon* has been fitted up for the reception of customers. Even the learned architects of log-cabins and pioneer cottages can find names for them only in the sonorous dialects of oriental climes. Time was when a farm-house was a farm-house and a porch a porch; but now the one is a *villa* or *haciendah*, and the other nothing less than a *verandah*. In short, this genteel slang pursues us from the cradle to the grave. In old times, when our fathers and mothers died, they were placed in coffins, and buried in the graveyard or burying-ground; now, when an unfortunate "party" or "individual" "deceases" or "becomes defunct," he is deposited in a "burial-casket" and "interred in a cemetery." It matters not that the good old words *grave* and *graveyard* have been set in the pure amber of the English classics,—that the Bible says, "There is no wisdom in the grave," "Cruel as the grave," etc. How much more pompous and magniloquent the Greek: "There is no wisdom in the cemetery," "Cruel as the cemetery!"

Seriously, let us eschew all these vulgar fineries of style, as we would eschew the fineries of a dandy. Their legitimate effect is to barbarize our language, and to destroy all the peculiar power, distinctiveness, and appropriateness of its terms. Words that are rarely used will at last inevitably disappear; and thus, if not speedily checked, this grandiloquence of expression will do an irreparable injury to our dear old English tongue. Poetry may for a while

escape the effects of this vulgar coxcombry, because it is the farthest out of the reach of such contagion; but, as prose sinks, so must poetry, too, be ultimately dragged down into the general gulf of feebleness and inanition.

It was a saying of John Foster that "eloquence resides in the thought, and no words, therefore, can make that eloquent which will not be so in the plainest that could possibly express the same." Nothing, therefore, can be more absurd than the notion that the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal of pompous and sonorous language are necessary to the expression of the sublime and powerful in eloquence and poetry. So far is this from being true, that the finest, noblest, and most spirit-stirring sentiments ever uttered, have been couched, not in sounding polysyllables from the Greek or Latin, but in the simplest Saxon,— in the language we hear hourly in the streets and by our firesides. Dr. Johnson once said that "big thinkers require big words." He did not think so at the time of the great Methodist movement in the last century, when "the ice period of the establishment was breaking up." He attributed the Wesleys' success to their plain, familiar way of preaching, "which," he says, "clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty." Arthur Helps tells a story of an illiterate soldier at the chapel of Lord Morpeth's castle in Ireland. Whenever Archbishop Whately came to preach, it was observed that this rough private was always in his place, mouth open, as if in sympathy with his ears. Some of the gentlemen playfully took him to task for it, supposing it was due to the usual vulgar admiration of a celebrated man. But the man had a better reason, and was able to give it. He said, "That isn't it at all. The Archbishop is easy to understand. There are no

fine words in him. A fellow like me, now, can follow along and take every bit of it in." "Whately's simplicity," observes a writer to whom we are indebted for this illustration, "meant no lack of pith or power. The whole momentum of his large and healthy brain went into those homely sentences, rousing and feeding the rude and the cultured hearer's hunger alike, as sweet bread and juicy meat satisfy a natural appetite."

Emerson observes that as any orator at the bar or the senate rises in his thought, he descends in his language; that is, when he rises to any height of thought or of passion, he comes down to a level with the ear of all his audience. "It is the oratory of John Brown and of Abraham Lincoln, the one at Charleston, the other at Gettysburg, in the two best specimens of oratory we have had in this country." Daniel Webster, in his youth, was a little bombastic in his speeches; but he very soon discovered that the force of a sentence depends chiefly on its meaning, and that great writing is that in which much is said in few words, and those the simplest that will answer the purpose. Having made this discovery, he became "a great eraser of adjectives"; and whether convincing juries, or thundering in the senate,—whether demolishing Hayne, or measuring swords with Calhoun,—on all occasions used the plainest words. "You will find," said he to a friend, "in my speeches to juries, no hard words, no Latin phrases, no *fieri facias;* and that is the secret of my style, if I have any."

What can be simpler and yet more sublime than the "Let there be light, and there was light!" of Moses, which Longinus so admired? Would it be an improvement to say, "Let there be light, and there was a solar

illumination!" "I am like a child picking up pebbles on the seashore," said Newton. Had he said he was like an awe-struck votary, lying prostrate before the stupendous majesty of the cosmical universe, and the mighty and incomprehensible *Ourgos* which had created all things, we might think it very fine, but should not carry in our memories such a luggage of words. The fiery eloquence of the field and the forum springs upon the vulgar idiom as a soldier leaps upon his horse. "Trust in the Lord, and keep your powder dry," said Cromwell to his soldiers on the eve of a battle. "Silence, you thirty voices!" roars Mirabeau to a knot of opposers around the tribune. "I'd sell the shirt off my back to support the war!" cries Lord Chatham; and again, "Conquer the Americans! I might as well think of driving them before me with this crutch." "I know," says Kossuth, speaking of the march of intelligence, "that the light has spread, and that *even the bayonets think.*" "You may shake me, if you please," said a little Yankee constable to a stout, burly culprit whom he had come to arrest, and who threatened violence, "but recollect, if you do it, you don't shake a chap of five-feet-six; you've *got to shake the whole State of Massachusetts!*" When a Hoosier was asked by a Yankee how much he weighed,—"Well," said he, "commonly I weigh about one hundred and eighty; but *when I'm mad I weigh a ton!*" "Were I to die at this moment," wrote Nelson after the battle of the Nile, "*more frigates* would be found written on my heart." The "Don't give up the ship!" of our memorable sea-captain stirs the heart like the sound of a trumpet. Had he exhorted the men to fight to the last gasp in defence of their imperilled liberties, their altars, and the glory of America, the words might have

been historic, but they never would have been quoted vernacularly.

There is another phase of the popular leaning to the grandiose style, which is not less reprehensible than that which we have noticed; we mean the affectation of foreign words and phrases. Many persons scarcely deign to call anything by its proper English name, but, as if they believed with Butler, that

> "he that's but able to express
> No sense at all in several languages,
> Will pass for learneder than he that's known
> To speak strongest reason in his own,"—

they apply to it some German, French, or Italian word. In their dialect people are *blasés, passés,* or have *un air distingué; in petto, dolce far niente,* are among their pet phrases; and not infrequently they betray their ignorance by some ludicrous blunder, as when they use *boquet* for *bouquet, soubriquet* for *sobriquet,* and talk of "a *sous,*" instead of "a *sou,*" a mistake as laughable as the Frenchman's "un pence." In striking contrast to this taste for exotics, is the rooted dislike which the French have to foreign words and idioms. It is only in cases of the direst necessity that they consent to borrow from their neighbors, whether in *perfide Angleterre* or elsewhere. Even when they deign to adopt a new word, they so disguise it that the parent language would not know it again. They strip it gradually of its foreign dress, and make it assume the costume of the country. "Beefsteak" is turned into *bifteck;* "plum-pudding" is metamorphosed into *pouding de plomb;* "partner" becomes *partenaire;* "riding-coat" becomes *redingote;* and now fashionable English tailors advertise these "redingotes," never for a moment dreaming

that they are borrowing an expression which the French stole from the English.

It is said that the Spaniards, in all ages, have been distinguished for their love of long and high-flown names,— the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal of appellative glory and honor. In looking at the long string of titles fastened like the tail of a kite to the name of some Don or other grandee, one is puzzled to tell whether it is the man that belongs to the name or the name to the man. There is nothing odd, therefore, in the conduct of that Spaniard, who, whenever his name was mentioned, always took off his hat in token of respect to himself,— that is, as the possessor of so many appellations. A person of high diplomatic talent, with the unpretending and rather plebeian name of "Bubb," was once nominated to represent Great Britain at Madrid. Lord Chesterfield was then a Minister of State, and on seeing the newly appointed minister remarked,— "My dear fellow, your name will damn you with the Spaniards; a one-syllable patronymic will infallibly disgust the grandees of that hyperbolic nation." "What shall I do?" said Bubb. "Oh! that is easily managed," rejoined the peer: "get yourself dubbed, before you start on your mission, as Don Vaco y Hijo Hermoso y toro y Sill y Bubb, and on your arrival you will have all the Spanish Court at your feet."

The effort of the Spaniards to support their dignity by long and sounding titles is repeated daily, in a slightly different form, by many democratic Americans. Writers and speakers are constantly striving to compensate for poverty of thought by a multitude of words. Magniloquent terms, sounding sentences, unexpected and startling phrases, are dropped from pen and tongue, as gaudy and

high-colored goods are displayed in shop-windows, to attract attention. "Ruskin," says an intelligent writer, "long ago cried out against the stuccoed lies which rear their unblushing fronts on so many street-corners, shaming our civilization, and exerting their whole influence to make us false and pretentious. Mrs. Stowe and others have warned us against the silken lies that, frizzled, flounced, padded, compressed, lily-whitened and rouged, flit about our drawing-rooms by gas-light, making us familiar with sham and shoddy, and luring us away from real and modest worth. Let there be added to these complaints the strongest denunciation of the kindred literary lies which hum about our ears and glitter before our eyes, which corrupt the language, and wrong every man and woman who speaks it by robbing it of some portion of its beauty and power."

When shall we learn that the secret of beauty and of force, in speaking and in writing, is not to say simple things finely, but to say fine things as simply as possible? "To clothe," says Fuller, "low creeping matter with high-flown language is not fine fancy, but flat foolery. It rather loads than raises a wren to fasten the feathers of an ostrich to her wings." It is a significant fact that the books over which generation after generation of readers has hung with the deepest delight,—which have retained their hold, amid all the fluctuations of taste, upon all classes,—have been written in the simplest and most idiomatic English, that English for which the "fine school" of writers would substitute a verbose and affected phraseology. Such books are "Robinson Crusoe," "Gulliver's Travels," and "Pilgrim's Progress," which Macaulay has justly characterized as treasures of pure English. Fitz-

Greene Halleck tells us that some years ago a letter fell into his hands which a Scotch servant-girl had written to her lover. The style charmed him, and his literary friends agreed that it was fairly inimitable. Anxious to clear up the mystery of its beauty, and even elegance, he searched for its author, who thus solved the enigma: "Sir, I came to this country four years ago. Then I did not know how to read or write. Since then I have learned to read and write, but I have not yet learned how to spell; so always when I sit down to write a letter, I choose those words which are so short and simple that I am sure to know how to spell them." This was the whole secret. The simple-minded Scotch girl knew more of rhetoric than Blair or Campbell. As Halleck forcibly says: "Simplicity is beauty. Simplicity is power."

It is through the arts and sciences, whose progress is so rapid, that many words of "learned length and thundering sound" force their way in these days into the language. The vocabulary of science is so repugnant to the ear and so hard to the tongue, that it is a long while before its terms become popularized. We may be sure that many years will elapse before *aristolochioid*, *megalosaurius*, *acanthopterygian*, *nothoclœna-trichomanoides*, *monopleurobranchian*, *anonaceo-hydrocharideo-nymphœoid*, and other such "huge verbal blocks, masses of syllabic aggregations, which both the tongue and the taste find it difficult to surmount," will establish themselves in the language of literature and common life. Still, while the lover of Anglo-Saxon simplicity is rarely shocked by such terms, there are hundreds of others, less stupendous, such as *phenomenon, demonstrative, inverse proportion, transcendental, category, predicament, exorbitant*, which, once heard only in

scientific lecture rooms or in schools, are now the common currency of the educated; and it is said that, in one of our Eastern colleges, the learned mathematical professor, on whom the duty devolved one morning of making the chapel prayer, startled his hearers by asking Divine Goodness "to enable them to know its length, its breadth, and its superficial contents." Should popular enlightenment go on for some ages with the prodigious strides it has lately made, a future generation may hear lovers addressing their mistresses in the terms predicted by Punch:

> "I love thee, Mary, and thou lovest me.
> Our mutual flame is like the affinity
> That doth exist between two simple bodies.
> I am Potassium to thine Oxygen.
> . . . Sweet, thy name is Briggs,
> And mine is Johnson. Wherefore should not we
> Agree to form a *Johnsonate of Briggs?*
> We will. The day, the happy day is nigh,
> When Johnson shall with beauteous Briggs combine."

Indispensable as the technical terms of science unquestionably are, there is no doubt they are often employed where simpler and plainer words would do as well or better. To express the results of science without the ostentation of its terms, is an admirable art, known, unfortunately, to but few. How few surgeons can communicate in simple, intelligible language to a jury, in a law-case, the results of a *post-mortem* examination! Almost invariably the learned witness finds a wound "in the parieties of the abdomen, opening the peritoneal cavity"; or an injury of some "vertebra in the dorsal or lumbar region"; or something else equally frightful. Some years ago, in one of the English courts, a judge rebuked a witness of this kind by saying, "You mean so and so, do you not, sir?"—at the same time translating his scientific

barbarisms into a few words of simple English. "I do, my Lord." "Then why can't you *say* so?" He *had* said so, but in a foreign tongue.

To all the writers and speakers who needlessly employ grandiose or abstract terms, instead of plain Saxon ones, we would say, as Falstaff said to Pistol: "If thou hast any tidings whatever to deliver, prithee deliver them like a man of this world!" Some years ago a white minister preached in a plain, direct style to a church of negroes in the South, whose "colored" pastor was greatly addicted to the use of high-flown language in his sermons. In the season of exhortation and prayer that followed, an old negro thanked the Lord for the various blessings of the Sabbath and the Sanctuary, and especially, he added, "we thank Thee that to-day we have been fed from *a low crib*." Would it not be well for preachers generally to remember that many of Christ's flock are "little ones," whose necks are short, and that they may consequently starve, if their food, however nutritious, is placed in too lofty a crib? Never, perhaps, did a college professor give a better lesson in rhetoric than was given by a plain farmer in Kennebec county, Maine, to a schoolmaster. "You are excavating a subterranean channel," it seems, said the pedagogue, as he saw the farmer at work near his house. "No, sir," was the reply, "I am only digging a ditch." A similar rebuke was once administered by the witty Governor Corwin, of Ohio, to a young lady who addressed him in high-flown terms. Being on a political tour through the State with the Hon. Thomas Ewing, they stopped at night at the house of a leading politician, but found no one at home except his niece, who presided at the tea table. Having never conversed

with "great men" before, she supposed she must talk to them in elephantine language. "Mr. Ewing, will you take condiments in your tea, sir?" inquired the young lady. "Yes, miss, if you please," replied the Senator. Corwin's eyes twinkled. Here was a temptation that could not be resisted. Gratified at the apparent success of her trial in talking to the United States Senator, the young lady addressed Mr. Corwin in the same manner—"Will you *take* condiments in *your* tea, sir?" "Pepper and salt, but no mustard," was the prompt reply, which the lady, it is said, never forgave, declaring that the Governor was "horridly vulgar."

The faults of all those who thus barbarize our tongue would be comparatively excusable, were it so barren of resources that any man whose conceptions are clear need find difficulty in wreaking them upon expression. But Shakespeare and Milton, Bacon and Locke, have shown that, whether we look to its flexibility and harmony, or to its gigantic strength, its exquisite delicacy and wondrous wealth of words, it is rich enough for all the exigencies of the human mind; that it can express the loftiest conceptions of the poet, portray the deepest emotions of the human heart; that it can convey, if not the fripperies, at least the manly courtesies of polite life, and make palpable the profoundest researches of the philosopher. It is not, therefore, because of the poverty of our vocabulary that so many writers Gallicize and Germanize our tongue; the real cause is hinted at in the answer of Handel to an ambitious musician who attributed the hisses of his hearers to a defect in the instrument on which he was playing: "The fault is not there, my friend," said the composer, jealous of the honor of the organ, on which he

himself performed: "the fact is, you have no music in your *soul*."

We are aware that the English tongue,— our own cartilaginous tongue, as some one has quaintly styled it,— has been decried, even by poets who have made it discourse the sweetest music, for its lack of expressive terms, and for its excess in consonants,— guttural, sibilant, or mute. It was this latter peculiarity, doubtless, which led Charles V., three centuries ago, to compare it to the whistling of birds; and even Lord Byron, whose own burning verse, distinguished not less by its melody than by its incomparable energy, has signally revealed the hidden harmony that lies in our short Saxon words,— turns traitor to his native language, and in a moment of caprice denounces it as

> "Our harsh, northern, grunting guttural,
> Which we are obliged to hiss, and spit, and sputter all,"

not thinking that in this very selection of condemnatory words he has strikingly shown the wondrous expressiveness of the tongue. Even Addison, who wrote so musical English, contrasting our own tongue with the vocal beauty of the Greek, and forgetting that the latter is the very lowest merit of a language, being merely its *sensuous* merit, calls it brick as against marble. Waller, too, ungrateful to the noble tongue that has preserved his name, declares that

> "Poets that lasting marble seek,
> Must carve in Latin or in Greek."

Because smoothness is one of the requisites of verse, it has been hastily concluded that languages in which vowels and liquids predominate must be better adapted to poetry, and that the most mellifluous must also be the most melodious. But so far is this from being true, that, as Henry Taylor

has remarked, in dramatic verse our English combinations of consonants are invaluable, both in giving expression to the harsher passions, and in imparting keenness and significancy to the language of discrimination, and especially to that of scorn.

The truth is, our language, so far from being harsh, or poor and limited in its vocabulary, is the richest and most copious now spoken on the globe. As Sir Thomas More long ago declared: "It is plenteous enough to expresse our myndes in anythinge whereof one man hath used to speak with another." Owing to its composite character, it has a choice of terms expressive of every shade of difference in the idea, compared with which the vocabulary of many other modern tongues is poverty itself. But for the impiety of the act, those who speak it might well raise a monument to the madcaps who undertook the tower of Babel; for, as the mixture of many bloods has made them the most vigorous of modern races, so has the mingling of divers tongues given them a language which is the noblest vehicle of thought ever vouchsafed to man. This very mingling of tongues in our language has been made the ground of an accusation against it; and the Anglo-Saxon is sometimes told by foreigners that he "has been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps"; that his dialect is "the alms-basket of wit," made up of beggarly borrowings, and is wholly lacking in originality.

It is true that the Anglo-Saxon has pillaged largely from the speech of other peoples; that he has a craving desire to annex, not only states and provinces, even whole empires, to his own, but even the best parts of their languages; that there is scarce a tongue on the globe which his absorbing genius has not laid under contribution to

enrich the exchequer of his all-conquering speech. Strip him of his borrowings,— or "annexations," if you will,— and he would neither have a foot of soil to stand upon, nor a rag of language in which to clothe his shivering ideas. To say nothing of the Greek, Latin and French which enter so largely into the woof of the tongue, we are indebted to the Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Arabic, Hebrew, Hindoo, and even the North American Indian dialects, for many words which we cannot do without. The word-barks of our language are daily increasing in size, and terms that sprang up at Delhi and Benares four thousand years ago are to-day scaling the cliffs of the Rocky Mountains. But while the English has thus borrowed largely from other tongues, and the multifarious etymology of "its Babylonish vocabulary," as its enemies are pleased to call it, renders it, of all modern languages, one of the most difficult to master in all its wealth and power, yet it makes up in eclecticism, vigor, and abundance, far more than it loses in apparent originality. Mosaic-like and heterogeneous as are its materials, it is yet no mingle-mangle or patchwork, but is as individual as the French or the German. Though the rough materials are gathered from a hundred sources, yet such is its digestive and assimilative energy that the most discordant aliments, passing through its anaconda-like stomach, are as speedily identified with its own independent existence as the beefsteak which yesterday gave roundness to the hinder symmetry of a prize ox, becomes to-morrow part and parcel of the proper substance,— the breast,leg, or arm,— of an Illinois farmer.

In fact, the very caprices and irregularities of our idiom, orthography, and pronunciation, which make for-

eigners "stare and gasp," and are ridiculed by our own philological ultraists, are the strongest proofs of the nobleness and perfection of our language. It is the very extent to which these caprices, peculiar idioms, and exceptions prevail in any tongue, that forms the true scale of its worth and beauty; and hence we find them more numerous in Greek than in Latin,—in French or Italian than in Irish or Indian. There is less symmetry in the rugged, gnarled oak, with the grotesque contortions of its branches, which has defied the storms of a thousand years, than in the smoothly clipped Dutch yew tree; but it is from the former that we hew out the knees of mighty line-of-battle ships, while a vessel built of the latter would go to pieces in the first storm. It was our own English that sustained him who soared "above all Greek, above all Roman fame"; and the same "well of English undefiled" did not fail the myriad-minded dramatist, when

> "Each scene of many-colored life he drew,
> Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new."

Nor have even these great writers, marvellous and varied as is their excellence, fathomed the powers of the language for grand and harmonious expression, or used them to the full. It has "combinations of sound grander than ever rolled through the mind of Milton; more awful than the mad gasps of Lear; sweeter than the sighs of Desdemona; more stirring than the speech of Antony; sadder than the plaints of Hamlet; merrier than the mocks of Falstaff." To those, therefore, who complain of the poverty or harshness of our tongue, we may say, in the words of George Herbert:

> "Let foreign nations of their language boast,
> What fine variety each tongue affords;
> I like our language, as our men and coast;—
> *Who cannot dress it well, want* WIT, *not* WORDS."

CHAPTER IV.

SMALL WORDS.

It is with words as with sunbeams,—the more they are condensed, the deeper they burn.—SOUTHEY.

The pompous march of blank verse admits the accompaniment of rolling and diffusive expressions; but energy, and condensation, and tenderness, must be sought for in the pithy, monosyllabic Saxon of our fathers.—REV. MATTHEW HARRISON.

AMONG the various forms of ingratitude, one of the commonest is that of kicking down the ladder by which one has climbed the steeps of celebrity; and a good illustration of this is the conduct of the author of the following lines, who, though indebted in no small degree for his fame to the small words, the monosyllabic music, of our tongue, sneers at them as low:

> "While feeble expletives their aid do join,
> And ten low words oft creep in one dull line."

How ingenious! how felicitous! the reader exclaims; and, truly, Pope has shown himself wonderfully adroit in ridiculing the Saxon part of the language with words borrowed from its own vocabulary. But let no man despise little words, even though he echo the little wasp of Twickenham. Alexander Pope is a high authority in English literature; but it is long since he was regarded as having the infallibility of a Pope Alexander. The multitude of passages in his works, in which the small words form not only the bolts, pins, and hinges, but the chief material in the structure of his verse, show that he knew well enough their value; but it was hard to avoid the temptation of

such a line as that quoted. "Small words," he elsewhere says, "are generally stiff and languishing, but they may be beautiful to express melancholy." It is the old story of

> "—— the ladder
> Whereto the climber upward turns his face,
> But when he once attains the utmost round,
> He then unto the ladder turns his back,
> Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
> By which he did ascend."

The truth is, the words most potent in life and literature,— in the mart, in the Senate, in the forum, and at the fireside,— are small words, the monosyllables which the half-educated speaker and writer despises. All passionate expression,— the outpouring of the soul when moved to its depths,— is, for the most part, in monosyllables. They are the heart-beats, the very throbs of the brain, made visible by utterance. The will makes its giant victory-strokes in little monosyllables, deciding for the right and against the wrong. In the hour of fierce temptation, at the ballot-box, in the court-room, in all the crises of life, how potent for good or evil are the little monosyllables, Yes and No! "*Yes* is the Olympian nod of approval which fills heaven with ambrosia and light; *no* is the stamp of Jupiter which shakes heaven and darkens the faces of the gods. *Yes:* how it trembles from the maiden's lips, the broken utterance, the key-syllable of a divine song which her heart only sings; how it echoes in the ecstatic pulses of the doubtful lover, and makes Paradise open its gates for the royal entry of the triumphing conqueror, Love. *No.*— well might Miles Standish say that he could not stand fire if *No* should come 'point-blank from the mouth of a woman': what 'captain, colonel or knight-at-arms' could? *No:* 'tis the

impregnable fortress,—the very Malakoff of the will; it is the breastwork and barrier thrown up which the charge must be fierce indeed to batter down or overleap. It is the grand and guarded tower against temptation; it is the fierce and sudden arrow through all the rings that dismays the suitors of the dear and long-cherished and faithful Penelope, and makes the unforgotten king start from the disguise of a beggar."

Again: there is a whole class of words, and those among the most expressive in the language, of which the great majority are monosyllables. We refer to the interjections. We are aware that some philologists deny that interjections are language. Horne Tooke sneers at this whole class of words as "brutish and inarticulate," as "the miserable refuge of the speechless," and complains that, "because beautiful and gaudy," they have been suffered to usurp a place among words. "Where will you look for it" (the interjection), he triumphantly asks; "will you find it among laws, or in books of civil institutions, in history, or in any treatise of useful arts or sciences? No: you must seek for it in rhetoric and poetry, in novels, plays and romances." This acute writer has forgotten one book in which interjections abound, and awaken in the mind emotions of the highest grandeur and pathos,—namely, the Bible. But the use of this part of speech is not confined to books. It is heard wherever men interchange thought and feeling, whether on the gravest or the most trivial themes; in tones of the tenderest love and of the deadliest hate; in shouts of joy and ecstacies of rapture, and in the expression of deep anguish, remorse and despair; in short, in the outburst of every human feeling. More than this, not only

is it heard in daily life, but we are told by the highest authority that it is heard in the hallelujahs of angels, and in the continual *Holy! Holy! Holy!* of the cherubim.

What word in the English language is fuller of significance, has a greater variety of meanings, than the diminutive *Oh?* Uttered by the infant to express surprise or delight, it is used by the man to indicate fear, aspiration or appeal, and, indeed, according to the tone in which it is uttered, may voice almost any one of the emotions of which he is capable. What a volume of meaning is condensed in the derisive "Oh! oh!" which greets a silly utterance in the House of Commons! In no other assembly, perhaps, are the powers of human speech more fully exhibited; yet it was in that body that one of the most famous of interjections originated,— we mean the cry of "Hear! hear!" which, though at first an imperative verb, is now "nothing more or less than a great historical interjection," indicating, according to the tone in which it is uttered, admiration, acquiescence, indignation or derision. It has been truly said that when a large assembly is animated by a common sentiment which demands instantaneous utterance, it can find that utterance only through interjections.

Again, what depth of meaning in this little word, as an expression of grief, in the following lines by Wordsworth:

> "She lived unknown, and few could know
> When Lucy ceased to be;
> Now she is in her grave,—and oh!
> The difference to me."

What possible combination of words could be more significant than the reply, "Pooh! pooh!" to a controversialist's theory, or the contemptuous "Fudge!" with

which Mr. Churchill, in "The Vicar of Wakefield," sums up the pretensions of the languishing Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs:

"Virtue, my dear Lady Blarney, virtue is worth any price; but where is that to be found?"

"Fudge!"

What volumes of meaning are sometimes condensed into the little word *psha!* "Doubt," says Thackeray, "is always crying *psha* and sneering." How expressive are those almost infinitesimal words which epitomize the alternations of human life, *ah!* and *ha!* As Fuller beautifully moralizes: "*Ha!* is the interjection of laughter; *ah!* is an interjection of sorrow. The difference between them is very small, as consisting only in the transposition of what is no substantial letter, but a bare aspiration. How quickly, in the age of a minute, in the very turning of our breath, is our mirth changed to mourning!"

The truth is that, so far is this class of words from being, as Max Müller contends, the mere *outskirts* of language, they are more truly words than any others. These little words, so expressive of joy, of hope, of doubt, of fear, which leap from the heart like fiery jets from volcanic isles,— these surviving particles of the ante-Babel tongues, which spring with the flush or blanching of the face to all lips, and are understood by all men,— these "silver fragments of a broken voice," to use an expression of Tennyson's, "the only remains of the Eden lexicon in the dictionaries of all races,"—

"The only words
Of Paradise that have survived the fall,"—

are emphatically and preëminently language. It is doubtless true that civilization, with its freezing formalities,

tends to diminish the use of interjections, as well as their natural accompaniments, gesture and gesticulation; but on the other hand, it should be noted, that there are "certain interjections which are the fruits of, and only fit to find a place in, the highest and most mature forms of human culture." Interjections, in truth, are not so much "*parts* of speech" as entire expressions of feeling or thought. They are preëminently pictorial. If I pronounce the words *house, strike, black, beautifully*, without other words or explanatory gestures, I say nothing distinctly; I may mean any one of a hundred things; but if I utter an interjectional exclamation, denoting joy or sorrow, surprise or fear, every person who hears me knows at once by what affection I am moved. I communicate a fact by a single syllable. Max Müller admits that interjections, together with gestures, the movements of the muscles of the mouth and the eye, would be quite sufficient for all the purposes which language answers with the majority of mankind. It is said that a late king of Naples once entertained his inflammable subjects from his balcony by a speech consisting of nothing but gestures and a few interjections, and sent them away contented. Coming from the lips of a great orator, these little words, so despised by grammarians, may be more powerful, more to the point, more eloquent, than a long speech. Their inherent expressiveness entitles them to be regarded as the appropriate language, the mother-tongue of passion; and hence the effect of good acting depends largely on the proper introduction and just articulation of this class of words.

Shakspeare's interjections exact a rare command of modulation, and cannot be rendered with any truth except by one who has mastered the whole play. What a

profound insight of the masterpiece of the poet is required of him who would adequately utter the word *indeed* in the following passage of Othello! "It contains in it," says an English writer, "the gist of the chief action of the play, and it implies all that the plot develops. It ought to be spoken with such an intonation as to suggest the diabolic scheme of Iago's conduct. There is no thought of the grammatical structure of the compound, consisting of the preposition *in* and the substantive *deed*, which is equivalent to *act*, *fact*, or *reality*. All this vanishes and is lost in the mere iambic dissyllable which is employed as a vehicle for the feigned tones of surprise."

"*Iago.* I did not think he had been acquainted with her.
Oth. O yes, and went between us very oft.
Iago. INDEED!
Oth. Indeed? ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that? Is he not honest?
Iago. Honest, my lord?
Oth. Honest? ay, honest!"

The English language is preëminently a language of small words. Its fondness for monosyllables is even stronger than that of the Anglo-Saxon. Not a few words of this class, such as the verbs *to love*, *bake*, *beat*, *slide*, *swim*, *bind*, *blow*, *brew*, were, in the Anglo-Saxon, dissyllables. The English language cuts down its words to the narrowest possible limits,— lopping and condensing, never expanding. Sometimes it cuts off an initial syllable, as in "'gin" for "engine," "'van" for "carryvan," "'bus" for "omnibus," "'wig" for "periwig;" sometimes it cuts off a final syllable, or syllables, as in "aid" for "aid-de-camp," "prim" for "primitive," "grog" for "grogram," "pants" for "pantaloons," "tick" for (pawnbroker's) "ticket;" sometimes it strikes out a letter, or letters, from the middle

of a word; as "last" for "latest," "lark" for "laverock," "since" for "sithence." Again, it contracts a word, as in "sent" for "sended," "built" for "builded," "chirp" for "chirrup" or "cheer up," "fag" for "fatigue," "consols" for "consolidated annuities," etc. In speaking, we clip our vowels shorter than any other people; Voltaire said that the English gained two hours a day by clipping their words. The same love of brevity has shown itself in rendering the final *e* in English always mute. In Chaucer the final *e* must often be sounded as a separate syllable, or the verse will limp. To the same cause we owe the hissing *s*, so offensive to foreign ears, and which has been compared to the sound of red-hot iron plunged in water. The old termination of the *verb*, *th*, has given way to *s* in the third person singular, and *en* to *s* in the third person plural.

The Anglo-Saxon, the substratum of our modern English, is emphatically monosyllabic; yet many of the grandest passages in our literature are made up almost exclusively of Saxon words. The English Bible abounds in grand, sublime, and tender passages, couched almost entirely in words of one syllable. The passage in Ezekiel, which Coleridge is said to have considered the sublimest in the whole Bible: "And he said unto me, son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest,"—contains seventeen monosyllables to three others. What passage in Holy Writ surpasses in energetic brevity that which describes the death of Sisera,—"At her feet he bowed, he fell; at her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; where he bowed, there he fell down dead"? Here are twenty-two monosyllables, to one dissyllable thrice repeated, and that a word which is usually

pronounced as a monosyllable. The lament of David over Saul and Jonathan is not surpassed in pathos by any similar passage in the whole range of literature; yet a very large proportion of these touching words are of one or two syllables:—"The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places; how are the mighty fallen! . . Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings. . . Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided. . . They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. . . How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

The early writers, the "pure wells of English undefiled," abound in small words. Shakspeare employs them in his finest passages, especially when he would paint a scene with a few masterly touches. Hear Macbeth:

> "Here lay Duncan,
> His silver skin laced with his golden blood;
> And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in Nature
> For ruin's wasteful entrance. There the murderers,
> Steep'd in the colors of their trade, their daggers
> Unmannerly breech'd with gore."

Are monosyllables passionless? Listen, again, to the "Thane of Cawdor":

> "That is a step
> On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
> For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires,
> Let not light see my black and deep desires.
> The eye winks at the hand. Yet, let that be
> Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see."

Two dissyllables only among fifty-two words!

Bishop Hall, in one of his most powerful satires, speaking of the vanity of "adding house to house and field to field," has these beautiful lines:

> "Fond fool! six feet shall serve for all thy store,
> And he that cares for most shall find no more."

"What harmonious monosyllables!" exclaims the critic, Gifford; yet they may be paralleled by others in the same writer, equally musical and equally expressive.

Was Milton tame? He knew when to use polysyllables of "learned length and thundering sound"; but he knew also when to produce the grandest effects by the small words despised by inferior artists. Read his account of the journey of the fallen angels:

> "Through many a dark and dreary vale
> They passed, and many a region dolorous,
> O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,
> *Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death,*—
> A universe of death.

In what other language shall we find in the same number of words a more vivid picture of desolation than this? Hear, again, the lost archangel calling upon hell to receive its new possessor:

> "One who brings
> A mind not to be changed by place or time.
> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.
> What matter where, if I be still the same,
> And what I should be—all but less than he
> Whom thunder hath made greater? Here, at least,
> We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built
> Here for His envy; will not drive us hence;
> Here we may reign secure, and, in my choice,
> To reign is worth ambition, though in hell;
> Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven."

Did Byron lack force or fire? His skilful use of monosyllables is often the very secret of his charm. Listen to

the words in which he describes the destruction of Sennacherib:

"For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
And their hearts beat but once, and forever lay still."

Here, out of forty-three words, all but three are monosyllables; and yet how exquisitely are all these monosyllables linked into the majestic and animated movement of the anapestic measure! Again, what can be more musical and more melancholy than the opening verse of the lines in which the same poet bids adieu to his native land?

"Adieu! adieu! my native shore
Fades o'er the waters blue,
The night-winds sigh, the breakers roar,
And shrieks the wild sea-mew.

"Yon sun that sets upon the sea
We follow in his flight;
Farewell awhile to him and thee,
My native land, good night!"

"With thee, my bark, I'll swiftly go
Athwart the foaming brine;
Nor care what land thou bear'st me to,
So not again to mine.

"Welcome, welcome, ye dark blue waves!
And when you fail my sight,
Welcome, ye deserts and ye caves!
My native land, good night!"

Three Latin words, *native*, *cave*, and *desert;* one French, *adieu;* the rest, English purely. The third and fourth lines paint the scene to the life; yet all the words but one are monosyllables.

The following brief passage from one of Landor's poems strikingly illustrates the metrical effect of simple words of one syllable:

"She was sent forth
To bring that light which never wintry blast
Blows out, nor rain, nor snow extinguishes—
The light that shines from loving eyes upon
Eyes that love back, till they can see no more."

Here, out of thirty different words, but one is a long one; nearly all the rest are monosyllables.

Herbert Spencer, in an able paper on the "Philosophy of Style," has pointed out the superior forcibleness of Saxon-English to Latin-English, and shown that it is due largely to the comparative brevity of the Saxon. If a thought gains in energy in proportion as it is expressed in fewer words, it must also gain in energy in proportion as the words in which it is expressed have fewer syllables. If surplus articulations fatigue the hearer, distract his attention, and diminish the strength of the impression made upon him, it matters not whether they consist of entire words or of parts of words. "Formerly," says an able writer, "when armies engaged in battle, they were drawn up in one long line, fighting from flank to flank; but a great general broke up this heavy mass into several files, so that he could bend his front at will, bring any troops he chose into action, and, even after the first onslaught, change the whole order of the field; and though such a broken line might not have pleased an old soldier's eye, as having a look of weakness about it, still it carried the day, and is everywhere now the arrangement. There will thus be an advantage, the advantage of suppleness, in having the parts of a word to a certain degree kept by themselves; this, indeed, is the way with all languages as they become more refined; and so far are monosyllabic languages from being lame and ungainly, that such are the sweetest and gracefulest, as those of Asia;

and the most rough and untamed (those of North America) abound in huge unkempt words,—yardlongtailed, like fiends."

We have already spoken of Johnson's fondness for big, swelling words, the leviathans of the lexicon, whatever the theme upon which he was writing; and also of certain speakers and writers in our own day, who have an equal contempt for small words, and never use one when they can find a pompous polysyllable to take its place. It is evident, however, from the passages we have cited, that these Liliputians,—these Tom Thumbs of the dictionary,—play as important a part in our literature as their bigger and more magniloquent brethren. Like the infusoria of our globe, so long unnoticed, which are now known to have raised whole continents from the depths of the ocean, these words, once so despised, are now rising in importance, and are admitted by scholars to form an important class in the great family of words. In some kinds of writing their almost exclusive use is indispensable. What would have been the fate of Bunyan's immortal book had he told the story of the Pilgrim's journey in the ponderous, elephantine "osities" and "ations" of Johnson, or the gorgeous Latinity of Taylor? It would have been like building a boat out of timbers cut out for a ship. It is owing to this grandiose style, as much as to any other cause, that the author of the "Rambler," in spite of his sturdy strength and grasp of mind, "lies like an Egyptian king, buried and forgotten in the pyramid of his fame." When we remember that the Saxon language, the soul of the English, is essentially monosyllabic; that our language contains, of monosyllables formed by the vowel *a* alone, more than five hundred,—by the vowel *e*, some four hundred and fifty; by

the vowel *i*, about four hundred; by the vowel *o*, over four hundred; and by the vowel *u*, more than two hundred and fifty; we must admit that these seemingly petty and insignificant words, even the microscopic particles, so far from meriting to be treated as "creepers," are of high importance, and that to know when and how to use them is of no less moment to the speaker or writer than to know when to use the grandiloquent expressions which we have borrowed from the language of Greece and Rome. To every man who has occasion to teach or move his fellow-men by tongue or pen, we would say in the words of Dr. Addison Alexander,—themselves a happy example of the thing he commends:

"Think not that strength lies in the big round word,
Or that the brief and plain must needs be weak,
To whom can this be true who once has heard
The cry for help, the tongue that all men speak,
When want or woe or fear is in the throat,
So that each word gasped out is like a shriek
Pressed from the sore heart, or a strange wild note
Sung by some fay or fiend. There is a strength
Which dies if stretched too far or spun too fine,
Which has more height than breadth, more depth than length.
Let but this force of thought and speech be mine,
And he that will may take the sleek, fat phrase,
Which glows and burns not, though it gleam and shine,—
Light, but no heat—a flash, but not a blaze!
Nor is it mere strength that the short word boasts;
It serves of more than fight or storm to tell.
The roar of waves that clash on rock-bound coasts,
The crash of tall trees when the wild winds swell,
The roar of guns, the groans of men that die
On blood-stained fields. It has a voice as well
For them that far off on their sick-beds lie;
For them that weep, for them that mourn the dead;
For them that laugh, and dance, and clap the hand;
To joy's quick step, as well as grief's slow tread,
The sweet, plain words we learned at first keep time,
And, though the theme be sad, or gay, or grand,
With each, with all, these may be made to chime,
In thought, or speech, or song, in prose or rhyme."

CHAPTER V.

WORDS WITHOUT MEANING.

POLONIUS. What do you read, my lord?
HAMLET. Words, words, words.—SHAKSPEARE.

Is not cant the *materia prima* of the Devil, from which all falsehoods, imbecilities, abominations, body themselves; from which no true thing can come? For cant is itself properly a double-distilled lie; the second power of a lie.—CARLYLE.

That virtue of originality that men so strain after is not newness, as they vainly think (there is nothing new), it is only *genuineness;* it all depends on this single glorious faculty of getting to the spring of things, and working out from that; it is the coolness and clearness and deliciousness of the water fresh from the fountain-head, opposed to the thick, hot, unrefreshing drainage from other men's meadows.—RUSKIN.

SOME years ago the author of the "Biographical History of Philosophy," in a criticism of a certain public performer in London, observed that one of his most marked qualities was the priceless one of frankness. "He accepts no sham. He pretends to admire nothing he does not in his soul admire. He pretends to *be* nothing that he *is* not. Beethoven bores him, and he says so: how many are as wearied as he, but dare not confess it! Oh, if men would but recognize the virtue of intrepidity! If men would but cease lying in traditionary formulas,—pretending to admire, pretending to believe, and all in sheer respectability!"

Who does not admire the quality here commended, and yet what quality, in this age of self-assertion, of sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, is more rare? What an amount of insincerity there is in human speech! In how

few persons is the tongue an index to the heart! What a meaningless conventionality pervades all the forms of social intercourse! Everybody knows that "How d'ye do?" and "Good morning!" are parroted in most cases without a thought of their meaning, or, at least, without any positive interest in the health or prosperity of the person addressed; we begin a letter to one whom we secretly detest with "My dear sir," and at the end subscribe ourselves his "obedient servant," though we should resent a single word from him which implied a belief in our sincerity, or bore the slightest appearance of a command. But not to dwell upon these phrases, the hollowness of which may be excused on the ground that they sweeten human intercourse, and prevent the roughest men from degenerating into absolute boors, it is yet startling to reflect how large a proportion of human speech is the veriest cant. That men should use words the meaning of which they have never weighed or discriminated, is bad enough; but that they should habitually use words as mere counters or forms, is certainly worse. There is hardly a class, a society, or a relation in which man can be placed toward man, that does not call into play more or less of language without meaning. The "damnable iteration" of the lawyer in a declaration of assault and battery is not more a thing of form than is the asseveration of one petitioner that he "will ever pray," etc., and of another that he "will be a thousand times obliged," if you will grant his request. Who does not know to what an amount of flummery the most trifling kindness done by one person to another often gives occasion on both sides? The one racks the vocabulary for words and phrases in which to express his pretended grat-

itude, while, in fact, he is only keenly humiliated by having to accept a favor, and the other as eloquently disclaims any merit in the grant, which he really grudged, and will never think of without feeling that he made a great sacrifice.

The secret feeling of many a "public benefactor" loudly praised by the newspapers, was finely let out by Lord Byron when he sent four thousand pounds to the Greeks, and privately informed a friend that he did not think he could *well get off for less.* How many wedding and other presents, and subscriptions to testimonials and to public enterprises, are made by those who secretly curse the occasion that exacts them? With the stereotyped "thanks" and "grateful acknowledgments" of the shopkeeper all are familiar, as they are with "the last," the "positively the last," and the "most positively the very last" appearances of the dramatic stars, that shine for five hundred or a thousand dollars a night. As nobody is deceived by these phrases, it seems hypercritical to complain of them, and yet one can hardly help sympathizing with the country editor who scolds a celebrated musician because he is now making farewell tours "once a year," whereas formerly he made them "only once in five years," Considering the sameness of shopkeepers' acknowledgments, one cannot help admiring the daring originality of the Dutch commercial house of which the poet Moore tells, that concluded a letter thus: "Sugars are falling more and more every day; not so the respect and esteem with which we are your obedient servants." The cant of public speakers is so familiar to the public that it is looked for as a matter of course. When a man is called on to address a public meeting, it is understood that the apology for his "lack of

preparation" to meet the demand so "unexpectedly" made upon him, will preface the "impromptu" which he has spent weeks in elaborating, as surely as the inevitable "This is so unexpected" prefaces the reply of a maiden to the long-awaited proposal of marriage from her lover.

Literary men are so wont to weigh their words that cant in them seems inexcusable; yet where shall we find more of it than in books, magazines, and newspapers? How many reasons are assigned by authors for inflicting their works on the public, other than the true one, namely, the pleasure of writing, the hope of a little distinction or of a little money! How many writers profess to welcome criticism, which they nevertheless ascribe to spite, envy, jealousy, if it is unfavorable! What is intrinsically more deceptive than the multitudinous "WE" in which every writer, great and small, hides his individuality,—whether his object be, as Archdeacon Hare says, "to pass himself off unnoticed, like the Irishman's bad guinea in a handful of halfpence," or to give to the opinions of a humble individual the weight and gravity of a council? "Who the —— is We?" exclaimed the elder Kean on reading a scathing criticism upon his "Hamlet"; and the question might be pertinently asked of many other *nominis umbrae* who deliver their literary judgments as oracularly as if they were lineal descendants of Minos or Rhadamanthus. Who can estimate the diminution of power and influence that would result, should the ten thousand editors in the land, who now speak with a voice of authority, as the organs of the public or a party, come down from their thrones, and exchange the regal "we" for the plebeian and egotistic "I"? Who is "I"? the reader might exclaim, in tones even more contemptuous than Kean's. The truth is, "I"

is a nobody. He represents only himself. He may be Smith or Jones,—the merest cipher. He may weigh but a hundred pounds, and still less morally and intellectually. He may be diminutive in stature, and in intellect a Tom Thumb. Who cares what such a pygmy thinks? But "we" represents a multitude, an imposing crowd, a mighty assembly, a congress, or a jury of sages; and we all quail before the opinions of the great "we." As a writer has well said: "'We have every reason to believe that beef will rise to starvation prices' is a sentiment which, when read in a newspaper, will make the stoutest stomach tremble; but substitute an 'I' for the 'we,' and nobody cares a copper for the opinion. It has been well said that what terrified Belshazzar was the hand on the wall, because he couldn't see to whom it belonged; and the same may be said of the editorial 'we.' It is the mystery in which it is involved that invests it with potency."

The history of literature abounds with examples of words used almost without meaning by whole classes of writers. Who does not know how feeble and hollow British poetry had become in the eighteenth century, just before the appearance of Cowper? Compelled to appear in the costume of the court, it had acquired its artificiality; and dealing with the conventional manners and outside aspects of men, it had almost forsaken the human heart, the proper haunt and main region of song. Instead of being the vehicle of lofty and noble sentiments, it had degenerated into a mere trick of art,—a hand-organ operation, in which one man could grind out tunes nearly as well as another. A certain monotonous smoothness, a perpetually recurring assortment of images, had become so much the traditional property of the versifiers, that

one could set himself up in the business as a shopkeeper might supply himself with his stock-in-trade. The style that prevailed has been aptly termed by the poet Lowell "the Dick Swiveller style." As Dick always called the wine "rosy," sleep "balmy," so did these correct gentlemen always employ a glib epithet or a diffuse periphrasis to express the commonest ideas. The sun was never called by his plain, almanac name, but always "Phœbus," or "the orb of day." The moon was known only as "Cynthia," "Diana," or "the refulgent lamp of night." Naïads were as plentiful in every stream as trout or pickerel. If these poets wished to say tea, they would write

"Of China's herb the infusion hot and mild."

Coffee would be nothing less than

"The fragrant juice of Mocha's kernel gray."

A boot would be raised to

"The shining leather that the leg encased."

All women in that golden age were "nymphs"; "dryads" were as common as birds; carriages were "harnessed pomps"; houses, humble or stately "piles"; and not a wind could blow, whether the sweet South, or "Boreas, Cecias, or Argestes loud," but it was "a gentle zephyr." Pope satirized this conventional language in the well-known lines:

"While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes:
Where'er you find 'the cooling western breeze,'
In the next line 'it whispers through the trees':
If crystal streams 'with pleasing murmurs creep,'
The reader's threatened, not in vain, with 'sleep.'"

Yet Pope himself was addicted to these circumlocutions and to threadbare mythological allusions, quite as much as the small wits whom he ridiculed. The manly genius

of Cowper broke through these traditionary fetters, and relieved poetry from the spell in which Pope and his imitators had bound its phraseology and rhythm. Expressing his contempt for the "creamy smoothness" of such verse, in which sentiment was so often

> "sacrificed to sound,
> And truth cut short to make a period round,"

he cried:

> "Give *me* the line that ploughs its stately course,
> Like a proud swan, conquering the stream by force;
> That, like some cottage beauty, strikes the heart,
> Quite unindebted to the tricks of art."

The charm of Cowper's letters, acknowledged by all competent judges to be the best in the English language, lies in the simplicity and naturalness,—the freedom from affectation,—by which they are uniformly characterized. Contrasting them with those of Wilberforce, Dr. Andrew Combe observes in a letter to a friend: "Cowper's letters, to my mind, do far more to excite a deep sense of religion, than all the labored efforts of Wilberforce. The one gives expression simply and naturally to the thoughts and feelings which spring up spontaneously as he writes. The other *forces in the one topic in all his letters,* and lashes himself up to a due fervor of expression, whether the mind wills or not. On one occasion Wilberforce dispatched a very hurried letter on Saturday night, without any religious expressions in it. In the night-time his conscience troubled him so much for the omission, that he could not rest till he sat down next morning and wrote a second with the piety, and apologizing for his involuntary departure from his rule! Only think what a perversion of a good principle this was!"

It is in the conduct of political affairs that the class of

words of which we have spoken are used most frequently. Sir Henry Wotton long since defined an ambassador as a gentleman sent abroad *to lie* for the benefit of his country. In Europe, so indissolubly has diplomacy been associated with trickery, that it is said Talleyrand's wonderful success with the representatives of foreign courts was owing largely to his frankness and fair dealing,—nobody believing it possible that he was striving for that for which he seemed to be striving. The plain, open, straightforward way in which he spoke of and dealt with all public matters, completely puzzled the vulgar minds, that could not dissociate from diplomacy the mysterious devices that distinguish the hack from the true diplomatist. In the titles and styles of address used by Kings and Emperors, we have examples of cant in its most meaningless forms. One sovereign is his Most Christian Majesty, another Defender of the Faith, etc. A monarch, forced by public opinion to issue a commission of inquiry, addresses all the members of it as his *well-beloved*, though in his heart he detests them.

Everybody knows that George I. of England obtained his crown, not by hereditary title, but by an act of Parliament; yet, in his very first speech to that body, he had the effrontery to speak of ascending "the throne of his ancestors." Well might Henry Luttrell exclaim:

> "O that in England there might be
> A duty on hypocrisy!
> A tax on humbug, an excise
> On solemn plausibilities,
> A stamp on everything that canted!
> No millions more, if these were granted,
> Henceforward would be raised or wanted."

So an American politician, who, by caucus-packing, "wire-pulling," and perhaps bribery, has contrived to get elected

to a State legislature or to Congress, will publicly thank his fellow-citizens for having sent him there "by their voluntary, unbiased suffrages." When the patriot, Patkul, was surrendered to the vengeance of Charles XII. of Sweden, the following sentence was read over to him: "It is hereby made known to be the order of his Majesty, our *most merciful* sovereign, that this man, who is a traitor to his country, be broken on the wheel and quartered," etc. "What mercy!" exclaimed the poor criminal. It was with the same mockery of benevolence that the Holy Inquisition was wont, when condemning a heretic to the torture, to express the tenderest concern for his temporal and eternal welfare. One of the most offensive forms of cant is the profession of extreme humility by men who are full of pride and arrogance. The haughtiest of all the Roman Pontiffs styled himself "the servant of the servants of God," at the very time when he humiliated the Emperor of Germany by making him wait five days barefoot in his ante-chamber in the depth of winter, and expected all the Kings of Europe, when in his presence, to kiss his toe or hold his stirrup. Catherine of Russia was always mouthing the language of piety and benevolence, especially when about to wage war or do some rascally deed. Louis the Fourteenth's paroxysms of repentance and devotion were always the occasion for fresh outrages upon the Huguenots; and Napoleon was always prating of his love of peace, and of being compelled to fight by his quarrelsome neighbors. While the French revolutionists were shouting "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity!" men were executed in Paris without law and against law, and heads fell by cart-loads from the knife of the guillotine. The favorite amusement of Couthon, one of the deadliest of Robes-

pierre's fellow cut-throats, was the rearing of doves. The contemplation of their innocence, he said, made the charm of his existence in consoling him for the wickedness of men. Even when he had reached the height of his "bad preëminence" as a terrorist, he was carried to the National Assembly or the Jacobin Club fondling little lapdogs, which he nestled in his bosom. It is told of one of his bloody compatriots, who was as fatal to men and as fond of dogs as himself, that when a distracted wife, who had pleaded to him in vain for her husband's life, in retiring from his presence, chanced to tread on his favorite spaniel's tail, he cried out, "Good heavens, Madame! have you no *humanity?*"

"My children," said Dr. Johnson, "clear your minds of cant." If professional politicians should follow this advice, many of them would be likely to find their occupation clean gone. At elections they are so wont to simulate the sentiments and language of patriotism,—to pretend a zeal for this, an indignation for that, and a horror for another thing, about which they are known to be comparatively indifferent, as if any flummery might be crammed down the throats of the people,—that the voters whom the old party hacks fancy they are gulling are simply laughing in their sleeves at their transparent attempts at deception. Daniel O'Connell, the popular Irish orator, is said to have had a large vocabulary of stock political phrases, upon which he rang the changes with magical effect. He could whine, and wheedle, and wink with one eye, while he wept with the other; and if his flow of oratory was ever in danger of halting, he had always at hand certain stereotyped catch-words, such as his "own green isle," his "Irish heart," his "head upon the block," his "hereditary bondsmen, know ye not," etc., which never failed him in any emergency.

Common, however, as are meaningless phrases on the stump and the platform, it is to be feared that they are hardly less so in the meeting-house, and there they are doubly offensive, if not unpardonable. It is a striking remark of Coleridge that truths, of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often considered so true that they lose all the power of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors. Continual handling wears off the beauty and significance of words, and it is only by a distinct effort of the mind that we can restore their full meaning. "Hence it is that the traditional maxims of old experience, though seldom questioned, have often so little effect on the conduct of life, because their meaning is never, by most persons, really felt, until personal experience has brought it home. And thus, also, it is that so many doctrines of religion, ethics, and even politics, so full of meaning and reality to first converts, have manifested a tendency to degenerate rapidly into lifeless dogmas, which tendency all the efforts of an education expressly and skilfully directed to keeping the meaning alive are barely found sufficient to counteract."*

There can be little doubt that many a man whose life is thoroughly selfish cheats himself into the belief that he is pious because he echoes with ease the phrases of piety and orthodoxy. Who is not familiar with scores of such pet phrases and cant terms, which are repeated at this day apparently without a thought of their meaning? Who ever attended a missionary meeting without hearing "the Macedonian cry," and an account of some "little interest," and "fields white for the harvest"?

*Mill's "Logic."

Who is not weary of the ding-dong of "our Zion" and the solecism of "in our midst"; and who does not long for a verbal millennium when Christians shall no longer "feel to take" and "grant to give"? "How much I regret," says Coleridge, "that so many religious persons of the present day think it necessary to adopt a certain cant of manner and phraseology as a token to each other! They must *improve* this and that text, and they must do so and so in a *prayerful* way; and so on. A young lady urged upon me, the other day, that such and such feelings were the *marrow* of all religion; upon which I recommended her to try to walk to London on her marrow-bones only." Mr. Spurgeon, in his "Lectures to Students," remarks that "'the poor unworthy dust' is an epithet generally applied to themselves by the proudest men in the congregation, and not seldom by the most mon-eyed and groveling; in which case the last words are not so very inappropriate. We have heard of a good man who, in pleading for his children and grandchildren, was so completely beclouded in the blinding influence of this expression, that he exclaimed, 'O Lord, save thy dust, and thy dust's dust, and thy dust's dust's dust.' When Abraham said, 'I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes,' the utterance was forcible and expressive; but in its misquoted, perverted, and abused form, the sooner it is consigned to its own element the better." Many persons have very erroneous ideas of what constitutes religious conversation. That is not necessarily religious talk which is interlarded with religious phrases, or which is solely about divine things; but that which is permeated with religious feeling, which is full of truth, reverence, and love, whatever the theme

may be. Who has not heard some men talk of the most worldly things in a way that made the hearer feel the electric current of spirituality playing through their words, and uplifting his whole spiritual being? And who has not heard other persons talk about the divinest things in so dry, formal, and soulless a way that their words seemed a profanation, and chilled him to the core? It is almost a justification of slang that it is generally an effort to obtain relief from words worn bare by the use of persons who put neither knowledge nor feeling into them, and which seem incapable of expressing anything real.

When Lady Townsend was asked if Whitefield had recanted, she replied, "No; he has only *canted*." Often, when there is no deliberate hypocrisy, good men use language so exaggerated and unreal as to do more harm than the grossest worldliness. We have often, in thinking upon this subject, called to mind a saying of Dr. Sharp, of Boston, a Baptist preacher, who was a hater of all cant and shams. "There's Dr. ——," said he, about the time of the first meeting of the Evangelical Alliance, "who went all the way to Europe to talk up brotherly love. If he should meet a poor Baptist minister in the street, he wouldn't speak to him." Nothing is cheaper than pious or benevolent talk. A great many men would be positive forces of goodness in the world, if they did not let all their principles and enthusiasm escape in words. They are like locomotives which let off so much steam through the escape valves, that, though they fill the air with noise, they have not power enough left to move the train. There is hardly anything which so fritters spiritual energy as talk without deeds. "The fluent boaster is not the man who is steadiest before the enemy; it is well said to him that his courage is

better kept till it is wanted. Loud utterances of virtuous indignation against evil from the platform, or in the drawing-room, do not characterize the spiritual giant; so much indignation as is expressed, has found vent; it is wasted; is taken away from the work of coping with evil; the man has so much less left. And hence he who restrains that love of talk, lays up a fund of spiritual strength."*

It is said that Pambos, an illiterate saint of the middle ages, being unable to read, came to some one to be taught a psalm. Having learned the simple verse, "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue," he went away, saying that was enough if it was practically acquired. When asked six months, and again many years after, why he did not come to learn another verse, he answered that he had never been able truly to master this. A man may have a heart overflowing with love and sympathy, even though he is not in the habit of exhibiting on his cards "J. Good Soul, Philanthropist," and was never known to unfold his cambric handkerchief with the words, "Let us weep." On the other hand, nothing is easier than to use a set phraseology without attaching to it any clear and definite meaning,—to cheat one's self with the semblance of thought or feeling, when no thought or feeling exists. It has been truly said that when good men who have no deep religious fervor use fervent language, which they have caught from others, or which was the natural expression of what they felt in other and better years,—above all, when they employ on mean and trivial occasions expressions which have been forged in the fires of affliction and hammered out in the shock of conflict,—they cannot easily imagine what a disastrous impression they produce

*Sermon by Rev. F. W. Robertson.

on keen and discriminating minds. The cheat is at once detected, and the hasty inference is drawn that all expressions of religious earnestness are affected and artificial. The honest and irrepressible utterance of strong conviction and deep emotion commands respect; but intense words should never be used when the religious life is not intense. "Costing little, words are given prodigally, and sacrificial acts must toil for years to cover the space which a single fervid promise has stretched itself over. No wonder that the slow acts are superseded by the available words, the weighty bullion by the current paper-money. If I have conveyed all I feel by language, I am tempted to fancy, by the relief experienced, that feeling has attained its end and realized itself. Farewell, then, to the toil of the 'daily sacrifice!' Devotion has found for itself a vent in words."*

Art, as well as literature, politics, and religion, has its cant, which is as offensive as any of its other forms. When Rossini was asked why he had ceased attending the opera in Paris, he replied, "I am embarrassed at listening to music with Frenchmen. In Italy or Germany, I am sitting quietly in the pit, and on each side of me is a man, shabbily dressed, but who feels the music as I do; in Paris I have on each side of me a fine gentleman in straw-colored gloves, who explains to me all I feel, but who feels nothing. All he says is very clever, indeed, and it is often very true; but it takes the gloss off my own impression,—if I have any."

* "Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson."

CHAPTER VI.

SOME ABUSES OF WORDS.

He that hath knowledge spareth his words.— PROVERBS XVII. 27.

Learn the value of a man's words and expressions, and you know him. . . He who has a superlative for everything, wants a measure for the great or small.— LAVATER.

Words are women; deeds are men.— GEORGE HERBERT.

He that uses many words for the explaining of any subject, doth, like the cuttle-fish, hide himself for the most part in his own ink.— RAY.

THE old Roman poet Ennius was so proud of knowing three languages that he used to declare that he had three hearts. The Emperor Charles V. expressed himself still more strongly, and declared that in proportion to the number of languages a man knows, is he more of a man. According to this theory, Cardinal Mezzofanti, who understood one hundred and fourteen languages, and spoke thirty with rare excellence, must have been many men condensed into one. Of all the human polyglots in ancient or modern times, he had perhaps the greatest knowledge of words. Yet, with all his marvellous linguistic knowledge, he was a mere prodigy or freak of nature, and, it has been well observed, scarcely deserves a higher place in the Pantheon of intellect than a blindfold chess-player or a calculating boy. Talking foreign languages with a fluency and accuracy which caused strangers to mistake him for a compatriot, he attempted no work of utility,—left no trace of his colossal powers; and therefore, in contemplating them, we can but wonder at his gifts, as we wonder

at the Belgian giant or a five-legged lamb. In allusion to his hyperbolical acquisitions, De Quincey suggests that the following would be an appropriate epitaph for his eminence: "Here lies a man who, in the act of dying, committed a robbery,—absconding from his fellow-creatures with a valuable polyglot dictionary." Enormous, however, as were the linguistic acquisitions of Mezzofanti, no man was ever less vain of his acquirements,—priding himself, as he did, less upon his attainments than most persons upon a smattering of a single tongue. "What am I," said he to a visitor, "but an ill-bound dictionary?" The saying of Catherine de Medicis is too often suggested by such prodigies of linguistic acquisition. When told that Scaliger understood twenty different languages—"That's twenty words for one idea," said she; "I had rather have twenty ideas for one word." In this reply she foreshadowed the great error of modern scholarship, which is too often made the be-all and the end-all of life, when its only relation to it should be that of a graceful handmaid. The story of the scholar who, dying, regretted at the end of his career that he had not concentrated all his energies upon the dative case, only burlesques an actual fact. The educated man is too often one who knows more of *language* than of *idea*,—more of the husk than of the kernel,—more of the vehicle than of the substance it bears. He has got together a heap of symbols,—of mere counters,—with which he feels himself to be an intellectual Rothschild; but of the substance of these shadows, the sterling gold of intellect, coin current throughout the realm, he has not an eagle. All his wealth is in paper,—paper like bad scrip, marked with a high nominal amount, but useless in exchange and repudiated in real traffic. The great

scholar is often an intellectual miser, who expends the spiritual energy that might make him a hero, upon the detection of a wrong dot, a false syllable, or an inaccurate word.

In this country, where fluency of speech is vouchsafed in so large a measure to the people, and every third man is an orator, it is easier to find persons with the twenty words for one idea, than persons with twenty ideas for one word. Of all the peoples on the globe, except perhaps the Irish, Americans are the most spendthrift of language. Not only in our court-houses and representative halls, but everywhere, we are literally deluged with words,—words,—words. Everybody seems born to make long speeches, as the sparks to fly upward. The Aristotelian theory that Nature abhors a vacuum appears to be a universal belief, and all are laboring to fill up the realms of space with "mouthfuls of spoken wind." The quantity of breath that is wasted at our public meetings,—religious, political, philanthropic, and literary,—is incalculable. Hardly a railroad or a canal is opened, but the occasion is seized on as a chance for speeches of "learned length and thundering sound"; and even a new hotel cannot throw open its doors without an amount of breath being expended, sufficient, if economically used, to waft a boat across a small lake.

One is struck, in reading the "thrilling" addresses on various occasions, which are said to have "chained as with hooks of steel the attention of thousands," and which confer on their authors "immortal reputations" that die within a year, to see what tasteless word-piling passes with many for eloquence. The advice given in Racine's "*Plaideurs*," by an ear-tortured judge to a long-winded lawyer, "to skip to the deluge," might wisely be repeated

to our thousand Ciceros and Chathams. The Baconian art of condensation seems nearly obsolete. Many of our orators are forever breaking butterflies on a wheel,—raising oceans to drown a fly,—loading cannon to shoot at humming-birds. Thought and expression are supplanted by lungs and the dictionary. Instead of great thoughts couched in a few close, home, significant sentences,—the value of a thousand pounds sterling of sense concentrated into a cut and polished diamond,—we have a mass of verbiage, delivered with a pompous elocution. Instead of ideas brought before us, as South expresses it, like water in a well, where you have fulness in a little compass, we have the same "carried out into many petty, creeping rivulets, with length and shallowness together."

It is in our legislative bodies that this evil has reached the highest climax. A member may have a thought or a fact which may settle a question; but if it may be couched in a sentence or two, he thinks it not worth delivering. Unless he can wire-draw it into a two-hours speech, or at least accompany it with some needless verbiage to plump it out in the report, he will sit stock-still, and leave the floor to men who have fewer ideas and more words at command. The public mind, too, revolts sometimes against nourishment in highly concentrated forms;—it requires bulk as well as nutriment, just "as hay is given to horses as well as corn, to distend the stomach, and enable it to act with its full powers." Then, again,—and this, perhaps, is one of the main causes of long-winded speeches,—there is a sort of reverence entertained for a man who can "spout" two or three hours on the stretch; and the wonder is heightened, if he does it without making a fool.

however, can be more absurd than to regard mere volubility as a proof of intellectual power. So far is this from being the case that it may be doubted whether any large-thoughted man, who was accustomed to grapple with the great problems of life and society, ever found it easy upon the rostrum to deliver his thoughts with fluency and grace.

Bruce, the traveler, long ago remarked of the Abyssinians, that "they are all orators, as," he adds, "are most barbarians." It is often said of such tonguey men that they have "a great command of language," when the simple fact is that language has a great command of them. As Whately says, they have the same command of language that a man has of a horse that runs away with him. The greatest orators of ancient and modern times have been remarkable for their economy of words. Demosthenes, when he

> "Shook the arsenal, and fulmined over Greece
> To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne,"

rarely spoke over thirty minutes, and Cicero took even less time to blast Catiline with his lightnings. There are some of the Greek orator's speeches which were spoken, as they may now be read, with sufficient slowness and distinctness, in less than half an hour; yet they are the effusions of that rapid and mighty genius the effect of whose words the ancients exhausted their language in describing; which they could adequately describe only by comparing it to the workings of the most subtle and powerful agents of nature,—the ungovernable torrent, the resistless thunder. Chatham was often briefer still, and Mirabeau, the master-spirit of the French tribune, condensed his thunders into twenty minutes.

It is said that not one of the three leading members of the convention that formed the Constitution of the United States, spoke, in the debates upon it, over twenty minutes. Alexander Hamilton was reckoned one of the most diffuse speakers of his day; yet he did not occupy more than two hours and a half in his longest arguments at the bar, nor did his rival, Aaron Burr, occupy over half that time. A judge who was intimately acquainted with Burr and his practice, declares that he repeatedly and successfully disposed of cases involving a large amount of property in half an hour. "Indeed," says he, "on one occasion he talked to the jury seven minutes in such a manner, that it took me, on the bench, half an hour to straighten them out." He adds: "I once asked him, 'Colonel Burr, why cannot lawyers always save the time and spare the patience of the court and jury by dwelling only on the important points in their cases?' to which Burr replied, 'Sir, you demand the greatest faculty of the human mind, selection.'" To these examples we may add that of a great English advocate. "I asked Sir James Scarlett," says Buxton, "what was the secret of his preëminent success as an advocate. He replied that he took care to press home the one principal point of the case, without paying much regard to the others. He also said that he knew the secret of being short. 'I find,' said he, 'that when I exceed half an hour, I am always doing mischief to my client. If I drive into the heads of the jury unimportant matter, I drive out matter more important that I had previously lodged there.'"

Joubert, a French author, cultivated verbal economy to such an extreme that he tried almost to do without words. "If there is a man on earth," said he, "tormented by the

cursed desire to get a whole book into a page, a whole page into a phrase, and this phrase into one word,—that man is myself." The ambition of many American speakers, and not a few writers, is apparently the reverse of this. We do not seem to know that in many cases, as Hesiod says, a half is more than the whole; and that a speech or a treatise hammered out painfully in every part, is often of less value than a few bright links, suggestive of the entire chain of thought. Who wants to swallow a whole ox, in order to get at the tenderloin?

Prolixity, it has been well said, is more offensive now than it once was, because men think more rapidly. They are not more thoughtful than their ancestors, but they are more vivid, direct, and animated in their thinking. They are more impatient, therefore, of longwindedness,—of a loose arrangement,—and of a heavy, dragging movement in the presentation of truth. "A century ago men would listen to speeches and sermons,—to divisions and subdivisions,—that now would be regarded as utterly intolerable. As the human body is whisked through space at the rate of a mile a minute, so the human mind travels with an equally accelerated pace. Mental operations are on straight lines, and are far more rapid than they once were. The public audience now craves a short method, a distinct sharp statement, and a rapid and accelerating movement, upon the part of its teachers." * It is, in short, an age of steam and electricity that we live in, not of slow coaches; an age of locomotives, electric telegraphs, and phonography; and hence it is the cream of a speaker's thoughts that men want,—the wheat, and not the chaff,—the kernel, and not the shell,—the strong pungent essence,

* Shedd's "Homiletics."

and not the thin, diluted mixture. The model discourse to-day is that which gives, not all that can be said, even *well* said, on a subject, but the very *apices rerum*, the tops and sums of things reduced to their simplest expression,—the drop of oil extracted from thousands of roses, and condensing all their odors,—the healing power of a hundred weight of bark in a few grains of quinine.

"Certainly the greatest and wisest conceptions that ever issued from the mind of man," says South, "have been couched under, and delivered in, a few, close, home, and significant words. . . Was not the work of all the six days (of creation) transacted in so many words? . . . Heaven, and earth, and all the host of both, as it were, dropped from God's mouth, and nature itself was but the product of a word. . . The seven wise men of Greece, so famous for their wisdom all the world over, acquired all that fame, each of them by a single sentence, consisting of two or three words. And γνῶθι σεαυτον still lives and flourishes in the mouths of all, while many vast volumes are extinct, and sunk into dust and utter oblivion."

Akin to the prolixity of style which weakens so many speeches, is the habitual exaggeration of language which deforms both our public and our private discourse. The most unmanageable of all parts of speech, with many persons, is the adjective. Voltaire has justly said that the adjectives are often the greatest enemies of the substantives, though they may agree in gender, number, and case. An adjective is, indeed, an addition; but "an addition may be an incumbrance, as even a dog finds out when a kettle is tied to his tail." Generally the weakness of a composition is just in proportion to the frequency with which this abused class of words is introduced. As in gunnery the

force of the discharge is proportioned, not to the amount of powder that can be used, but to the amount that can be thoroughly ignited, so it is not the multitude of words, but the exact number fired by the thought, that gives energy to expression. There are some writers and speakers who seem to have forgotten that there are three degrees of comparison. The only adjectives they ever use are the superlative, and even these are raised to the *third power*. With them there is no gradation, no lights and shadows. Every hill is Alpine, every valley Tartarean; every virtue is godlike, every fault a felony; every breeze a tempest, and every molehill a mountain. Praise or blame beggars their vocabulary; epithets are heightened into superlatives; superlatives stretch themselves into hyperboles; and hyperboles themselves get out of breath, and die asthmatically of exhaustion.

Of all the civilized peoples on the face of the globe, our Hibernian friends excepted, Americans are probably the most addicted to this exaggeration of speech. As our mountains, lakes, and rivers are all on a gigantic scale, we seem to think our speech must be framed after the same pattern. Even our jokes are of the most stupendous kind; they set one to thinking of the Alleghanies, or suggest the immensity of the prairies. A Western orator, in portraying the most trivial incident, rolls along a Mississippian flood of eloquence, and the vastness of his metaphors makes you think you are living in the age of the megatheriums and saurians, and listening to one of a pre-Adamite race. In ordinary conversation, such is our enthusiasm or our poverty of expression, that we cannot talk upon the most ordinary themes, except in the most extravagant and enraptured terms. Everything that pleases us is positively

"delicious," "nice," or "charming"; everything hand[illegible]od is "elegant," or "splendid"; everything that we dislike [illegible] "hateful," "dreadful," "horrible," or "shocking." Listen to a circle of lively young ladies for a few minutes, and you will learn that, within the compass of a dozen hours, they have met with more marvelous adventures and hair-breadth escapes,—passed through more thrilling experiences, and seen more gorgeous spectacles, endured more fright, and enjoyed more rapture,—than could be crowded into a whole life-time, even if spun out to threescore and ten.

Ask a person what he thinks of the weather in a rainy season, and he will tell you that "it rains cats and dogs," or that "it beats all the storms since the flood." If his clothes get sprinkled in crossing the street, he has been "drenched to the skin." The days are "as dark as Egypt," and the mud in the streets is everywhere "up to one's knees." If a Yankee makes a shrewd or lucky speculation, he is said to have cleared "heaps of money," and everybody envies him "the pile of greenbacks he has bagged." All our winds blow a hurricane; all our fires are conflagrations,—even though only a hencoop is burned; all our fogs can be cut with a knife. Nobody fails in this country; he "bursts up." All our orators rival Demosthenes in eloquence; they beat Chillingworth in logic; and their sarcasm is more "withering" than that of Junius himself. Who ever heard of a public meeting in this country that was not "an immense demonstration"; of an actor's benefit at which the house was not "crowded from pit to dome"; of a political nomination that was not "sweeping the country like wild-fire"? Where is the rich man who does not "roll in wealth,"—or the poor man who is "worth

All our good men are paragons of
monsters of iniquity.
c speakers seem incapable of express-
plain, calm, truthful manner on any
A great deal of our writing, too, is
ıral, falsetto key. Quiet ease of style,
y's "Essays," Goldsmith's "Vicar of
Wakefield," or White's "Natural History of Selborne," is almost a lost art. Our newspaper literature is becoming more and more sensational; and it seems sometimes as if it would come to consist of head-lines and exclamation points. Some of the most popular correspondents are those whose communications are a perfect *florilegium* of fine words. They rival the "tulipomania" in their love of gaudy and glaring colors, and apparently care little how trite or feeble their thoughts may be, provided they have dragon-wings, all green and gold. It was said of Rufus Choate, whose brain teemed with a marvellous wealth of words, and who was very prodigal of adjectives, that he "drove a substantive-and-six" whenever he spoke in public, and that he would be as pathetic as the grand lamentations in "Samson Agonistes" on the obstruction of fishways, and rise to the cathedral music of the universe on the right to manufacture India-rubber suspenders. When Chief-Justice Shaw, before whom he had often pleaded, heard that there was a new edition of "Worcester's Dictionary," containing two thousand five hundred new words, he exclaimed, "For heaven's sake, don't let Choate get hold of it!"

Even scientific writers, who might be expected to aim at some exactness, often caricature truth with equal grossness, —describing things the most Liliputian by Brobdignagian

metaphors. Thus a French naturalist represents the blood of a louse as "rushing through his veins like a torrent!" Even in treating of this very subject of exaggeration, a writer in an English periodical, after rebuking sharply this *American* fault, himself outrages truth by declaring that "he would walk fifty miles on foot to see the man that never caricatures the subject on which he speaks!" To a critic who thus fails to reck his own rede, we would say with Sir Thomas Browne: "Thou who so hotly disclaimest the devil, be not thyself guilty of diabolism."

Seriously, when shall we have done with this habit of amplification and exaggeration,—of blowing up molehills into Himalayas and Chimborazos? Can anything be more obvious than the dangers of such a practice? Is it not evident that by applying super-superlatives to things petty or commonplace, we must exhaust our vocabulary, so that when a really great thing is to be described, we shall be bankrupt of adjectives? It is true there is no more unpardonable sin than dulness; but, to avoid being drowsy, it is not necessary that our "good Homers" should be always electrifying us with a savage intensity of expression. There is nothing of which a reader tires so soon as of a continual blaze of brilliant periods,—a style in which a "*qu' il mourut*" and a "let there be light" are crowded into every line. On the other hand, there is nothing which adds so much to the beauty of style as contrast. Where all men are giants, there are no giants; where all is emphatic in style, there is no emphasis. Travel a few months among the mountains, and you will grow as sick of the everlasting monotony of grandeur, of beetling cliffs and yawning chasms, as of an eternal succession of plains. Yet in defiance of this obvious truth, the sensational writer thinks

the reader will deem him dull unless every sentence blazes with meaning, and every paragraph is crammed with power. His intellect is always armed cap-a-pïe, and every passage is an approved attitude of mental carte and tierce. If he were able to create a world, there would probably be no latent heat in it, and no twilight; and should he drop his pen and turn painter, his pictures would all be foreground, with no more perspective than those of the Chinese.

It is a law of oratory, and indeed of all discourse, whether oral or written, that it is the subdued expression of conviction and feeling, when the speaker or writer, instead of giving vent to his emotions, veils them in part, and suffers only glimpses of them to be seen, that is the most powerful. It is the man who is all *but* mastered by his excitement, but who, at the very point of being mastered, masters himself,—apparently cool when he is at a white heat,—whose eloquence is most conquering. When the speaker, using a gentler mode of expression than the case might warrant, appears to stifle his feelings and studiously to keep them within bounds, a reaction is produced in the hearer's mind, and, rushing into the opposite extreme, he is moved more deeply than by the most vehement and passionate declamation. The jets of flame that escape now and then,—the suppressed bursts of feeling,—the partial eruptions of passion,—are regarded as but hints or faint intimations of the volcano within. Balzac, in one of his tales, tells of an artist, who, by a few touches of his pencil, could give to a most commonplace scene an air of overpowering horror, and throw over the most ordinary and prosaic objects a spectral air of crime and blood. Through a half-opened door you see a bed with the clothes confusedly heaped, as in some death-struggle, over an undefined object

which fancy whispers must be a bleeding corpse; on the floor you see a slipper, an upset candlestick, and a knife perhaps; and these hints tell the story of blood more significantly and more powerfully than the most elaborate detail, because the imagination of man is more powerful than art itself. So with Hood's description of the Haunted House:—

> "Over all there hung a cloud of fear,
> A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
> And said, as plain as whisper to the ear,
> The place is haunted!"

Thoreau, describing an interview he had at Concord with John Brown, notices as one of the latter's marked peculiarities, that he did not overstate anything, but spoke within bounds. "He referred to what his family had suffered in Kansas, without ever giving the least vent to his pent-up fire. *It was a volcano with an ordinary chimney-flue.*" In one of the published letters of the late Rev. F. W. Robertson, there are some admirable comments on a letter, full of strongly-expressed religious sentiments, pious resolutions, etc., which he had received from a fashionable lady. The letter, he says, "is in earnest so far as it goes; only *that fatal facility of strong words* expresses feeling which will seek for itself no other expression. She believes or means what she says, but the very vehemence of the expression injures her, for really it expresses the penitence of a St. Peter, and would not be below the mark if it were meant to describe the bitter tears with which he bewailed his crime; but when such language is used for trifles, there remains *nothing stronger for the awful crises of human life.* It is like Draco's code,—death for larceny, and there remains for parricide or treason only death."

Let us, then, be as chary of our superlatives as of our Sunday suit. Hardly a greater mistake can be made in regard to expression, than to suppose that a uniform intensity of style is a proof of mental power. So far is this from being true, that it may safely be said that such intensity not only implies a want of truthfulness and simplicity, but even of earnestness and real force. Intensity is not a characteristic of nature, in spirit or in matter. The surface of the earth is not made up of mountains and valleys, but, for the most part, of gentle undulations. The ocean is not always in a rage, but, if not calm, its waves rise and fall with gentle fluctuation. Hurricanes and tempests are the extraordinary, not the usual, conditions of our atmosphere. Not only the strongest thinkers, but the most powerful orators, have been distinguished rather for moderation than for exaggeration in expression. The great secret of Daniel Webster's strength as a speaker lay in the fact that he made it a practice to understate rather than to overstate his confidence in the force of his own arguments, and in the logical necessity of his conclusions. The sober and solid tramp of his style reflected the movements of an intellect that palpably respected the relations and dimensions of things, and to which exaggeration would have been an immorality. Holding that violence of language is evidence of feebleness of thought and lack of reasoning power, he kept his auditor constantly in advance of him, by suggestion rather than by strong asseveration, and by calmly stating the facts that *ought* to move the hearer, instead of by tearing passion to tatters, the man being always felt to be greater than the man's feelings. Such has been the method of all great rhetoricians of ancient and modern times.

The most effective speakers are not those who tell all they think or feel, but those who, by maintaining an austere conscientiousness of phrase, leave on their hearers the impression of reserved power. On the other hand, if we do the work of a pistol with a twenty-four pounder, or kill cock robins with Paixhans,—and, when anything more formidable is to be destroyed, touch off the fusee of a volcano,—we shall find, when we come to the real tug of war, that our instruments of offense are weak, worn out and worthless. Great bastions of military strength must lie at rest in times of peace, that they may be able to execute their destructive agencies in times of war; and so let it be with the superlatives of our tongue. Never call on the "tenth legion," or "the old guard," except on occasions corresponding to the dignity and weight of those tremendous forces. Say plain things in a plain way, and then, when you have occasion to send a sharp arrow at your enemy, you will not find your quiver empty of shafts which you wasted before they were wanted.

"You should not speak to think, nor think to speak;
But words and thoughts should of themselves outwell
From inner fullness: chest and heart should swell
To give them birth. Better be dumb a week
Than idly prattle; better in leisure sleek
Lie fallow-minded, than a brain compel
To wasting plenty that hath yielded well,
Or strive to crop a soil too thin and bleak.
One true thought, from the deepest heart up-springing,
May from within a whole life fertilize;
One true word, like the lightning sudden gleaming,
May rend the night of a whole world of lies.
Much speech, much thought, may often be but seeming,
But in one truth might boundless ever lies."

CHAPTER VII.

SAXON WORDS, OR ROMANIC?

Spartam nactus es; hanc exorna,— should be our motto regarding both our country and our country's tongue.— HARE.

When you doubt between words, use the plainest, the commonest, the most idiomatic. Eschew fine words as you would rouge; love simple ones as you would native roses on your cheek.— IB.

Were I mistress of fifty languages, I would think in the deep German, converse in the gay French, write in the copious English, sing in the majestic Spanish, deliver in the noble Greek, and make love in the soft Italian.— MADAME DE STAEL.

> Words have their proper places, just like men;
> We listen to, not venture to reprove,
> Large language swelling under gilded domes,
> Byzantine, Syrian, Persepolitan.— LANDOR.

IT is a question of deep interest to all public speakers and writers, and one which has provoked not a little discussion of late years, whether the Saxon or the Romanic part of our language should be preferred by those who would employ "the Queen's English" with potency and effect. Of late it has been the fashion to cry up the native element at the expense of the foreign; and among the champions of the former we may name Dr. Whewell, of Cambridge, and a modern Rector of the University of Glasgow, whom De Quincey censures for an erroneous direction to the students to that effect. We may also add Lord Stanley, — one of the most brilliant and polished speakers in the British Parliament,— who, in an address some years ago to the students of the same University, after expressing his surprise that so few persons, comparatively, in Great Brit-

ain, have acquainted themselves with the origin, the history and the gradual development of that mother tongue which is already spoken over half the world, which is destined to yet further geographical extension, and which embodies many of the noblest thoughts that have ever issued from the brain of man,— adds: "Depend upon it, it is the plain Saxon phrase, not the term borrowed from Greek or Roman literature, that, whether in speech or writing, goes straightest and strongest to men's heads and hearts." On the other hand "the Opium-Eater," commenting on a remark of Coleridge that Wordsworth's "Excursion" bristles beyond most poems with polysyllabic words of Greek or Latin origin, asserts that so must it ever be in meditative poetry upon solemn, philosophic themes. The gamut of ideas needs a corresponding gamut of expressions; the scale of the thinking, which ranges through every key, exacts for the artist an unlimited command over the entire scale of the instrument he employs.

It has been computed, he adds, that the Italian opera has not above six hundred words in its whole vocabulary: so narrow is the range of its emotions, and so little are those emotions disposed to expand themselves into any variety of thinking. The same remark applies to that class of simple, household, homely passion, which belongs to the early ballad poetry. "Pass from these narrow fields of the intellect, where the relations of the objects are so few and simple, and the whole prospect so bounded, to the immeasurable and sea-like arena upon which Shakspeare careers,— co-infinite with life itself,— yes, and with something more than life. Here is the other pole, the opposite extreme. And what is the choice of diction? What is the *lexis?* Is it Saxon exclusively, or is it Saxon by preference? So far

from that, the Latinity is intense,— not, indeed, in his construction, but in his choice of words; and so continually are these Latin words used, with a critical respect to their earliest (and where *that* happens to have existed, to their unfigurative) meaning, that, upon this one argument I would rely for upsetting the else impregnable thesis of Dr. Farmer as to Shakspeare's learning. . . These 'dictionary' words are indispensable to a writer, not only in the proportion by which he transcends other writers as to extent and as to subtilty of thinking, but also as to elevation and sublimity. Milton was not an extensive or discursive thinker, as Shakspeare was; for the motions of his mind were slow, solemn, sequacious, like those of the planets; not agile and assimilative; not attracting all things into its sphere; not multiform: repulsion was the law of his intellect,—he moved in solitary grandeur. Yet, merely from this quality of grandeur,— unapproachable grandeur, — his intellect demanded a larger infusion of Latinity into his diction." De Quincey concludes, therefore, that the true scholar will manifest a partiality for neither part of the language, but will be governed in his choice of words by the theme he is handling.

This we believe to be the true answer to the question. The English language has a special dowry of power in its double-headed origin; the Saxon part of the language fulfills one set of functions; the Latin, another. Neither is good or bad absolutely, but only in its relation to its subject, and according to the treatment which the subject is meant to receive. The Saxon has nerve, terseness and simplicity; it smacks of life and experience, and "puts small and convenient handles to things,— handles that are easy to grasp"; but it has neither height nor breadth

for every theme. To confine ourselves to it would be, therefore, a most egregious error. The truth is, it is no one element which constitutes the power and efficiency of our noble and expressive tongue, but the great multitude and the rich variety of the elements which enter into its composition. Its architectural order is neither Doric, Ionic, nor Corinthian, but essentially composite; a splendid mosaic, to the formation of which many ancient and modern languages have contributed; defective in unity and symmetrical grace of proportion, but of vast resources and of immense power. With such a wealth of words at our command, to confine ourselves to the pithy but limited Saxon, or to employ it chiefly, would be to practice a foolish economy,—to be poor in the midst of plenty, like the miser amid his money-bags. All experiments of this kind will fail as truly, if not as signally, as that of Charles James Fox, who, an intense admirer of the Saxon, attempted to portray in that dialect the Revolution of 1688, and produced a book which his warmest admirers admitted to be meagre, dry, and spiritless,—without picturesqueness, color, or cadence.

It is true that within a certain limited and narrow circle of ideas, we can get along with Saxon words very well. The loftiest poetry, the most fervent devotion, even the most earnest and impassioned oratory, may all be expressed in words almost purely Teutonic; but the moment we come to the abstract and the technical,—to discussion and speculation,—we cannot stir a step without drawing on foreign sources. Simple narrative,—a pathos resting upon artless circumstances,—elementary feelings,—homely and household affections,—these are all most happily expressed by the old Saxon vocabulary; but a passion which rises

into grandeur, which is complex, elaborate, and interveined with high meditative feelings, would languish or absolutely halt, without aid from the Romanic part of the vocabulary. If Anglo-Saxon is the frame-work or skeleton of our language, the spine on which the structure of our speech is hung,—if it is the indispensable medium of familiar converse and the business of life,—it no more fills out the full and rounded outline of our language, than the skeleton, nerves, and sinews form the whole of the human body. It is the classical contributions, the hundreds and thousands of Romanic words which during and since the sixteenth century have found a home in our English speech, that have furnished its spiritual conceptions, and endowed the material body with a living soul.

These words would never have been adopted, had they not been absolutely necessary to express new modes and combinations of thought. The language has gained immensely by the infusion, not only in richness of synonyme and the power of expressing nice shades of thought and feeling, but more than all, in light-footed polysyllables that trip singing to the music of verse. If the saying of Shakspeare, that

"The learned pate ducks to the golden fool,"

is more expressive than it would be if couched in Latin words, would not the fine thought that

"Nice customs courtesy to kings,"

be greatly injured by substituting any other words for *nice* and *courtesy?* It has been observed that Wordsworth's famous ode, "Intimations of Immortality," translated into *Hints of Deathlessness*, would hiss like an angry gander. Instead of Shakspeare's

"Age cannot wither her,
Nor custom stale her infinite variety,"

say "her boundless manifoldness," and would not the sentiment suffer in exact proportion with the music? With what equally expressive Saxon terms would you supply the place of such words as the long ones blended with the short in the exclamation of the horror-stricken Macbeth:

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No! this my hand will rather
The multitudinous sea incarnadine,
Making the green one red."

As the poet Lowell justly asks, could anything be more expressive than the huddling epithet which here implies the tempest-tossed soul of the speaker, and at the same time pictures the wallowing waste of ocean more vividly than does Æschylus its rippling sunshine? "'Multitudinous seas,'— what an expression! You feel the wide weltering waste of confused and tumbling waves around you in that single word. What beauty and wealth of color too in incarnadine, a word capable of dyeing an ocean! and then, after these grand polysyllables, how terse and stern comes in the solid Saxon, as if a vast cloud had condensed into great heavy drops,— the deep one red."* Is it not plain that if you substitute any less massive words for the *sesquipedalia verba,* the sonorous terms "multitudinous" and "incarnadine," the whole grandeur of the passage would collapse at once?

Among the British orators of this century few have had a greater command of language, or used it with nicer discrimination, than Canning. What can be happier than the blending of the native and the foreign elements in the following eloquent passage? Most of the italicized words are Saxon:

* W. W. Story.

"Our present repose is no more a proof of our inability to act than the state of inertness and inactivity in which I have seen *those mighty masses that float in the waters above your town* is a proof that they are devoid of strength or incapable of being fitted for action. You well know, gentlemen, how soon one of those stupendous *masses now reposing on their shadows in perfect stillness* — how soon, upon any call of patriotism or of necessity, it would assume *the likeness of an animated thing, instinct with life and motion* — how soon it *would ruffle*, as it were, *its swelling plumage — how quickly it would put forth all its beauty and its bravery, collect its scattered* elements *of strength, and awake its dormant thunders.* Such as is one of those magnificent machines when springing from inaction into a display of its strength, such is England itself, while, apparently passive and motionless, she silently causes her power to be put forth on an adequate occasion."

In the famous passage in Sterne's "Tristam Shandy," which has been pronounced the most musical in our language, nearly all the words are Saxon:

"The accusing spirit that flew up to Heaven's chancery with the oath, blushed as he gave it in, and the recording angel, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out forever."

It is true, as we have already said, that the Saxon has the advantage of being the aboriginal element, the basis and not the superstructure, of the language; it is the dialect of the nursery, and its words therefore, being consecrated to the feelings by early use, are full of secret suggestions and echoes, which greatly multiply their power. Its words, though not intrinsically, yet to us, from association, are more concrete and pictorial than those derived from the Latin; and this is particularly true of many beautiful words we have lost. How much more expressive to us is "sea-robber" than "pirate"; "sand-waste" than "desert"; "eye-bite" than "fascinate"; "mill-race" than "channel"; "water-fright" than "hydrophobia"; "moonling" than "lunatic"; "show-holiness" than "hypocrisy"; "in-wit" than "conscience"; "gold-hoard" than "treasure"! Therefore, as De Quincey says, "wherever the passion of a poem is of that sort which *uses, presumes or*

postulates the ideas, without seeking to extend them, Saxon will be the 'cocoon' (to speak by the language applied to silk-worms), which the poem spins for itself. But on the other hand, where the motion of the feeling is *by* and *through* the ideas, where (as in religious or meditative poetry,—Young's, for instance, or Cowper's), the pathos creeps and kindles underneath the very tissues of the thinking, there the Latin will predominate; and so much so that, whilst the flesh, the blood and the muscle will be often almost exclusively Latin, the articulations only, or hinges of connection, will be Anglo-Saxon."

Let us be thankful, then, that our language has other elements than the Saxon, admirable as that is. Let us be grateful for that inheritance of collateral wealth, which, by engrafting our Anglo-Saxon stem with the mixed dialect of Normandy, caused ultimately the whole opulence of Roman, and even of Grecian thought, to play freely through the pulses of our native tongue. No doubt the immediate result was anything but pleasant. For a long time after the language was thrown again into the crucible, Britons, Saxons and Normans talked a jargon fit neither for gods nor men. It was a chaos of language, hissing, sputtering, bubbling like a witch's caldron. But luckily the Saxon element was yet plastic and unfrozen, so that the new elements could fuse with its own, thus forming that wondrous instrument of expression which we now enjoy, fitted fully to reflect the thoughts of the myriad-minded Shakspeare, yet, at the same time, with enough remaining of its old forest stamina for imparting a masculine depth to the sublimities of Milton or the Hebrew prophets, and to the Historic Scriptures that patriarchal simplicity which is one of their greatest charms.

We are aware that, in reply to all this, it may be asked, Are not ninety-three words out of every hundred in the Bible Anglo-Saxon; and where are the life, beauty and freshness of our language to be found in so heaped a measure as in that pure well of English, the Bible? Nothing can be plainer or simpler than its vocabulary, yet how rich is it in all that concerns the moral, the spiritual and even the intellectual interests of humanity! Is it logic that we ask? What a range of abstract thought, what an armory of dialectic weapons, what an enginery of vocal implements for moving the soul, do we find in the epistles of St. Paul! Is it rhetoric that we require? "Where," in the language of South, "do we find such a natural prevailing pathos as in the lamentations of Jeremiah? One would think that every letter was written with a tear, every word was the noise of a breaking heart; that the author was a man compacted of sorrow, disciplined to grief from his infancy, one who never breathed but in sighs, nor spoke but in a groan." Yet, while our translation owes much of its beauty to the Saxon, there are passages the grandeur of which would be greatly diminished by the substitution of Saxon words for the Latin ones. In the following the Latin words italicized are absolutely necessary to preserve one of the sublimest rhythms of the Bible. "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great *multitude,* and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia, for the Lord God *Omnipotent reigneth.*'"

The truth is, the translators of the Bible, while they have employed a large percentage of Saxon words, have hit the golden mean in their version, never hesitating to use a Latin word when the sense or the rhythm demanded

it; and hence we have the entire volume of revelation in the happiest form in which human wit and learning have ever made it accessible to man. This an English Catholic writer, a convert from the Anglican church, has mournfully acknowledged in the following touching passage: — "Who will not say that the uncommon beauty and marvellous English of the Protestant Bible is not one of the great strongholds of heresy in this country? It lives on the ear, like a music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells, which the convert hardly knows how he can forego. Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words. It is part of the national mind, and the anchor of national seriousness. . . The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. The power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. It is the representative of his best moments, and all that there has been about him of soft and gentle, and pure and penitent and good, speaks to him for ever out of his English Bible. . . It is his sacred thing, which doubt has never dimmed, and controversy never soiled. In the length and breadth of the land there is not a Protestant with one spark of religiousness about him, whose spiritual biography is not in his Saxon Bible."*

It is a very striking and suggestive fact that those very writers who award the palm for expressiveness to the Saxon part of our language, cannot extol the Saxon without the help of Latin words. Dr. Gregory tells us that when, in the company of Robert Hall, he chanced to use the term "felicity," three or four times in rather quick succession, the latter asked him: "Why do you say felicity?

* Faber.

Happiness is a better word, more musical, and genuine English, coming from the Saxon." "Not more musical," said Dr. Gregory. "Yes, more musical,—and so are all words derived from the Saxon, generally. Listen, sir: 'My heart is smitten, and withered like grass.' There is plaintive music. Listen again, sir: 'Under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.' There is cheerful music." "Yes, but *rejoice* is French." "True, but all the rest is Saxon; and *rejoice* is almost out of time with the other words. Listen again: 'Thou hast delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.' All Saxon, sir, except *delivered*. I could think of the word *tear* till I wept." But whence did Robert Hall get the words "musical," and "plaintive music"? Are they not from the Greek and the French? Is not this stabbing a man with his own weapons? It is a curious fact, that, in spite of this eulogy on Saxon words, a more than ordinary percentage of the words used in Mr. Hall's writings are of Romanic origin. Again, even Macaulay, one of the most brilliant and powerful of all English writers, finds it impossible to laud the Saxon part of the language without borrowing nearly half the words of his famous panegyric from the Romanic part of the vocabulary. In his article on Bunyan, in a passage written in studied commendation of the "pure old Saxon" English, we find, omitting the particles and wheelwork, one hundred and twenty-one words, of which fifty-one, or over forty-two per cent., are classical or alien. In other words, this great English writer, than whom few have a more imperial command over all the resources of expression, finds the Saxon insufficient for his eloquent eulogy on Saxon, and is obliged

to borrow four-tenths of his words, and those the most emphatic ones, from the imported stock!

It is an important fact, that while we can readily frame a sentence wholly of Anglo-Saxon, we cannot do so with words entirely Latin, because the determinative particles, — the bolts, pins, and hinges of the structure,— must be Saxon. Macaulay, in his famous contrast of Dr. Johnson's conversational language with that of his writings, has vividly illustrated the superiority of a Saxon-English to a highly Latinized diction. "The expressions which came first to his tongue were simple, energetic, and picturesque. When he wrote for publication, he did his sentences out of English into Johnsonese. 'When we were taken up stairs,' says he in one of his letters from the Hebrides, 'a dirty fellow bounced out of the bed on which one of us was to lie.' This incident is recorded in his published Journey as follows: 'Out of one of the beds on which we were to repose, started up, at our entrance, a man as black as a Cyclops from the forge.' Sometimes," Macaulay adds, "Johnson translated aloud. 'The Rehearsal,' he said, 'has not wit enough to keep it sweet;' then, after a pause, 'It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction.'" Doubtless Johnson, like Robertson, Hume, and Gibbon, thought that he was refining the language by straining it through the lees of Latin and Greek, so as to imbue it with the tone and color of the learned tongues, and clear it of the barbarous Saxon; while real purity rather springs from such words as are our own, and peculiar to our fatherland. Nevertheless, the elephantine diction of the Doctor proved, in the end, a positive blessing to the language; for by pushing the artificial or classic system to

an extreme, it brought it into disrepute, and led men to cultivate again the native idiom.

In conclusion, to sum up our views of the matter, we would say to every young writer,—give no fantastic preference to either Saxon or Latin, the two great wings on which our magnificent English soars and sings, for you can spare neither. The union of the two gives us an affluence of synonymes and a nicety of discrimination which no homogeneous tongue can boast. Never use a Romanic word when a Teutonic one will do as well; for the former carries a comparatively cold and conventional signification to an English ear. Between the sounding Latin and the homely, idiomatic Saxon, there is often as much difference in respect to a power of awakening associations, as between a gong and a peal of village bells. Pleasant though it be to read the pages of one who writes in a foreign tongue, as it is pleasant to visit distant lands, yet there is always the charm of home, with all its witchery, in the good old Anglo-Saxon of our fathers. Of the words that we heard in our childhood, there are some which have stored up in them an ineffable sweetness and flavor which make them precious ever after; there are others which are words of might, of power,—old, brawny, large-meaning words, heavily laden with associations,—which, when they strike the imagination, awaken tender and tremulous memories, obscure, subtle, and yet most powerful. Our language is essentially Teutonic; the whole skeleton of it is thoroughly so; all its grammatical forms, all its most common and necessary words, are still identical with that old mother tongue whose varying forms lived on the lips of Arminius and of Hengest, of Harold of Norway, and of Harold of England, of Alaric, of Alboin, and of Charles the Great.

On the other hand, never scruple to use a Romanic word when the Saxon will not do as well; that is, do not over-Teutonize from any archaic pedantry, but use the strongest, the most picturesque, or the most beautiful word, from whatever source it may come. The Latin words, though less home-like, must nevertheless be deemed as truly denizen in the language as the Saxon,—as being no alien interlopers, but possessing the full right of citizenship. Perhaps of all our writers Shakspeare may be deemed in this matter the student's best friend. No one better knows how far the Saxon can go, or so often taxes its utmost resources; yet no one better knows its poverty and weakness; and, therefore, while in treating homely and familiar themes he uses simple words, and shows by his total abstinence from Latin words in some of his most beautiful passages, that he understands the monosyllabic music of our tongue, yet in his loftiest flights it is on the broad pinions of the Roman eagle that he soars, and, we shall find, if we regard him closely, that every feather belongs to its wing.

CHAPTER VIII.

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But, whether language be or be not fitted to *cloak* our ideas, as Talleyrand and Goldsmith before him supposed, there are few persons to whom it has not seemed at times inadequate to *express* them. How many ideas occur to us in our daily reflections, which, though we toil after them for hours, baffle all our attempts to seize them and render them comprehensible? Who has not felt, a thousand times, the brushing wings of great thoughts, as, like startled birds, they have swept by him,—thoughts so swift and so many-hued that any attempt to arrest or describe them seemed like mockery? How common it is, after reflecting on some subject in one's study, or a lonely walk, till the whole mind has become heated and filled with the ideas it suggests, to feel a descent into the veriest tameness when attempting to embody those ideas in written or spoken words! A thousand bright images lie scattered in the fancy, but we cannot picture them; glimpses of glorious visions appear to us, but we cannot arrest them; questionable shapes float by us, but, when we question them, they will not answer. Even Byron, one of the greatest masters of eloquent expression, who was able to condense into one word, that fell like a thunderbolt, the power and anguish

of emotion, experienced the same difficulty, and tells us in lines of splendid declamation:

"Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me — could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe — into one word,
And that one word were lightning, I would speak;
But. as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword."

So, too, that great verbal artist, Tennyson, complains:

"I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal,
And half conceal the soul within."

De Quincey truly remarks that all our thoughts have not words corresponding to them in our yet imperfectly developed nature, nor can ever express themselves in acts, but must lie appreciable by God only, like the silent melodies in a great musician's heart, never to roll forth from harp or organ.

"The sea of thought is a boundless sea,
Its brightest gems are not thrown on the beach;
The waves that would tell of the mystery
Die and fall on the shore of speech."

The Germans have coined a phrase to characterize a class of persons who have conception without expression,— gifted, thoughtful men, lovers of goodness and truth, who have no lack of ideas, but who hesitate and stammer when they would put them into language. Such men they term men of "passive genius." Their minds are like black glass, absorbing all the rays of light, but unable to give out any for the benefit of others. Jean Paul calls them "the dumb ones of earth," for, like Zachariah, they have visions of high import, but are speechless when they would

tell them. The infirmity of these dumb ones, is, however, the infirmity, in a less degree, of all men, even the most fluent; for there are thoughts which mock at all attempts to express them, however "well-languaged" the thinker may be.

It is not true, then, that language is, as Vinet characterizes it, "*la pensée devenue matière;*" for the very expression involves a contradiction. Words are nothing but symbols,— imperfect, too, at best,— and to make the symbol in any way a measure of the thought is to bring down the infinite to the measure of the finite. It is true that our words mean more than it is in their power to express,— shadow forth far more than they can define; yet, when their capacity has been exhausted, there is much which they fail, not only to express, but even to hint. There are abysses of thought which the plummet of language can never fathom. Like the line in mathematics, which continually approaches to a curve, but, though produced forever, does not cut it, language can never be more than an *asymptote* to thought. Expression, even in Shakspeare, has its limits. No power of language enables man to reveal the features of the mystic Isis, on whose statue was inscribed: "I am all which hath been, which is, and shall be, and no mortal hath ever lifted my veil."

> "Full oft
> Our thoughts drown speech, like to a foaming force
> Which thunders down the echo it creates:
> Words are like the sea-shells on the shore; they show
> Where the mind ends, and not how far it has been."

Notwithstanding all this, however, there is truth in the lines of Boileau:

> "Selon que notre idée est plus ou moins obscure,
> L'expression la suit, ou moins nette, ou plus pure;
> Ce que l'on concoit bien s'énonce clairement,
> Et les mots pour le dire arrivent aisément."

In spite of the complaints of those who, like the great poets we have quoted, have expressed in language of wondrous force and felicity their feeling of the inadequacy of language, it is doubtless true, as a general thing, that impression and expression are relative ideas; that what we clearly conceive we can clearly convey; and that the failure to embody our thoughts is less the fault of our mother tongue than of our own deficient genius. What subject, indeed, is there in the whole boundless range of imagination, which some English author has not treated in his mother tongue with a nicety of definition, an accuracy of portraiture, a gorgeousness of coloring, a delicacy of discrimination, and a strength and force of expression which fall scarcely short of perfection itself? Is there not something almost like sorcery in the potent spell which some of these mighty magicians of language are able to exercise over the soul? Yet the right arrangement of the right words is the whole secret of the witchery,—a charm within the reach of any one of equal genius. Possess yourself of the necessary ideas, and feel them deeply, and you will not often complain of the barrenness of language. You will find it abounding in riches,—exuberant beyond the demand of your intensest thought. "The statue is not more surely included in the block of marble, than is all conceivable splendor of utterance in 'Webster's Unabridged.'" As Goethe says:

"Be thine to seek the honest gain,
No shallow-sounding fool;
Sound sense finds utterance for itself,
Without the critic's rule;
If to your heart your tongue be true,
Why hunt for words with much ado?

But we hear some one say,—is this the only secret of

apt words? Is nothing more necessary to be done by one who would obtain a command of language? Does not Dr. Blair tell us to study the "Spectator," if we would learn to write well; and does not Dr. Johnson, too, declare that "whoever wishes to obtain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison?" Yes, and it is a pity that Johnson did not act upon his own advice. That it is well for a writer to familiarize himself with the best models of style, (models sufficiently numerous to prevent that mannerism which is apt to result from unconscious imitation, when he is familiar with but one,) nobody can doubt. A man's vocabulary depends largely on the company he keeps; and without a proper vocabulary no man can be a good writer. Words are the material that the author works in, and he must use as much care in their selection as the sculptor in choosing his marble or the painter in choosing his colors. By profound study of the masterpieces of literature he may not only enrich his vocabulary, but learn in some degree the secret of their charm, detect his own deficiencies, and elevate and refine his taste to a degree that can be reached in no other way. But to suppose that a good style can be acquired by imitating any one writer, or any set of writers, is one of the greatest follies that can be imagined.

Such a supposition is based on the notion that fine writing is an addition from without to the matter treated of,—a kind of ornament superinduced, or luxury indulged in, by one who has sufficient genius; whereas the brilliant or powerful writer is not one who has merely a copious vocabulary, and can turn on at will any number of splendid phrases and swelling sentences, but he is one

who has something to say, and knows how to say it. Whether he dashes off his compositions at a heat, or elaborates them with fastidious nicety and care, he has but one aim, which he keeps steadily before him, and that is to give forth what is in him. From this very earnestness it follows that whatever be the brilliancy of his diction or the harmony of his periods,— whether it blaze with the splendors of a gorgeous rhetoric, or take the ear prisoner with its musical surprises,— he never makes these an end, but has always the charm of an incommunicable simplicity.

Such a person "writes passionately because he feels keenly; forcibly, because he conceives vividly; he sees too clearly to be vague; he is too serious to be otiose; he can analyze his subject, and therefore he is rich; he embraces it as a whole and in parts, and therefore he is consistent; he has a firm hold of it, and therefore he is luminous. When his imagination wells up, it overflows in ornament; when his heart is touched, it thrills along his verse. He always has the right word for the right idea, and never a word too much. If he is brief, it is because few words suffice; when he is lavish of them, still each word has its mark, and aids, not embarrasses, the vigorous march of his elocution. He expresses what all feel, but what all cannot say, and his sayings pass into proverbs among the people, and his phrases become household words and idioms of their daily speech, which is tessellated with the rich fragments of his language, as we see in foreign lands the marbles of Roman grandeur worked into the walls and pavements of modern palaces." *

It follows from all this that there is no model style, and that the kind of style demanded in any composition

* "The Idea of a University," by J. H. Newman.

depends upon the man and his theme. The first law of good writing is that it should be an expression of a man's self,—a reflected image of his own character. If we know what the man is, we know what his style should be. If it mirrors his individuality, it is, relatively, good; if it is not a self-portraiture, it is bad, however polished its periods, or rhythmical its cadences. The graces and witcheries of expression which charm us in an original writer, offend us in a copyist. Style is sometimes, though not very happily, termed the dress of thought. It is really, as Wordsworth long ago declared, the *incarnation* of thought. In Greek, the same word, Logos, stands for reason and speech,—and why? Because they cannot be divided; because thought and expression are one. They each co-exist, not one *with* the other, but *in* and *through* the other. Not till we can separate the soul and the body, life and motion, the convex and concave of a curve, shall we be able to divorce thought from the language which only can embody it. But allowing, for the moment, that style is the verbal clothing of ideas, who but the most poverty-stricken person would think of wearing the clothes of another? It is true that there are certain general qualities, such as clearness, force, flexibility, simplicity, variety, which all good styles will alike possess, just as all good clothing will have certain qualities in common. But for all men to clothe their thoughts in the same manner would be as foolish as for a giant to array himself in the garments of a dwarf, a stout man in those of a thin, or a brunette in those of a blonde. Robert Hall, when preaching in early life at Cambridge, England, for a short time aped Dr. Johnson; but he soon saw the folly of it. "I might as well have attempted," said he, "to dance a hornpipe in the cum-

brous costume of Gog and Magog. My puny thoughts could not sustain the load of words in which I tried to clothe them."

It is with varieties of style as with the varieties of the human face, or of the leaves of the forest; while they are obvious in their general resemblance, yet there are never two indistinguishably alike. Sometimes the differences are very slight,—so minute and subtle, as almost to defy characterization; yet, like the differences in musical styles which closely resemble each other, they are *felt* by the discerning reader, and so strongly that he will scarcely mistake the authorship, even on a single reading. Men of similar natures will have similar styles; but think of Waller aping the gait of Wordsworth, or Leigh Hunt that of Milton! Can any one conceive of Hooker's style as slipshod,—of Dryden's as feeble and obscure,—of Gibbon's as mean and vulgar,—of Burke's as timid and creeping,—of Carlyle's as dainty and mincing,—of Emerson's as diffuse and pointless,—or of Napier's as lacking picturesqueness, *verve*, and fire?

There are some writers of a quiet, even temperament, whose sentences flow gently along like a stream through a level country, that hardly disturbs the stillness of the air by a sound; there are others vehement, rapid, redundant, that roll on like a mountain torrent forcing its way over all obstacles, and filling the valleys and woods with the echoes of its roar. One author, deep in one place and shallow in another, reminds you of the Ohio, here unfordable, and there full of sand-bars,—now hurrying on with rapid current, and now expanding into lovely lakes, fringed with forests and overhung with hills; another, always brimming with thought, reminds you of the Mississippi, which rolls

onward the same vast volume, with no apparent diminution, from Cairo to New Orleans. "Sydney Smith, concise, brisk, and brilliant, has a manner of composition which exactly corresponds to those qualities; but how would Lord Bacon look in Smith's sentences? How grandly the soul of Milton rolls and winds through the arches and labyrinths of his involved and magnificent diction, waking musical echoes at every new turn and variation of its progress; but how could the thought of such a light trifler as Cibber travel through so glorious a maze, without being lost or crushed in the journey? The plain, manly language of John Locke could hardly be translated into the terminology of Kant,—would look out of place in the rapid and sparkling movement of Cousin's periods,—and would appear mean in the cadences of Dugald Stewart."*

Not only has every original writer his own style, which mirrors his individuality, but the writers of every age differ from those of every other age. Joubert has well said that if the French authors of to-day were to write as men wrote in the time of Louis XIV., their style would lack truthfulness, for the French of to-day have not the same dispositions, the same opinions, the same manners. A woman who should write like Madame Sévigné would be ridiculous, because she is not Madame Sévigné. The more one's writing smacks of his own character and of the manners of his time, the more widely must his style diverge from that of the writers who were models only because they excelled in manifesting in their works either the manners of *their* own age or their own character. Who would tolerate to-day a writer who should reproduce, however successfully, the stately periods of Johnson, the mel-

* "Essays and Reviews," by Edwin P. Whipple.

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tinkles over stones among the sedges and trees. Sir Philip Sidney could not hear the old ballad of Chevy Chase without his blood being stirred as by the sound of a trumpet. Boyle felt a tremor at the utterance of two verses of Lucan; and Spence declares that he never repeated particular lines of delicate modulation without a shiver in his blood, not to be expressed. Who is not sensible of certain magical effects, altogether distinct from the thoughts, in some of Coleridge's weird verse, in Keats's "Nightingale," and in the grand harmonies of Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, Ruskin, and De Quincey?

Perspicuity, or transparency of style, is, undoubtedly, the first law of all composition; but it may be doubted whether *vividness*, which was the ruling conception of the Greeks with regard to this property of style, is not quite as essential. Style, it has been well said, is not only a medium; it is also a form. It is not enough that the thoughts be seen through a clear medium; they must be seen in a distinct shape. It is not enough that truth be visible in a clear, pure air; the atmosphere must not only be crystalline and sparkling, but the things in it must be bounded and defined by sharply-cut lines.*

A style may be as transparent as rock-water, and yet the thoughts be destitute of boldness and originality. The highest degree of transparency, however, can be attained only by the writer who has thoroughly mastered his theme, and whose whole nature is stirred by it. As that exquisite material through which we gaze from our windows on the beauties of nature, obtains its crystalline beauty after undergoing the furnace,—as it was melted by fire before the rough particles of sand disappeared,—so it is with

* "Homiletics and Pastoral Theology," by W. G. Shedd, D.D.

language. It is only a burning invention that can make it transparent. A powerful imagination must fuse the harsh elements of composition until all foreign substances have disappeared, and every coarse, shapeless word has been absorbed by the heat, and then the language will brighten into that clear and unclouded style through which the most delicate conceptions of the mind and the faintest emotions of the heart are visible.

How many human thoughts have baffled for generations every attempt to give them expression! How many ideas and principles are there of the highest moment, which are so familiar to us as to seem utterly commonplace, which yet were toiled after perhaps for ages before they were seized and rendered comprehensible! How many notions are there which we ourselves have grasped at, as if we saw them floating in an atmosphere just above us, and found the arm of our intellect just too short to reach them; and then comes a happier genius, who, in a lucky moment, and from some vantage ground, arrests the meteor in its flight, and, clutching the floating phantom, drags it from the skies to earth; condenses that which was but an impalpable coruscation of spirit; fetters that which was but the lightning-glance of thought; and, having so mastered it, bestows it as a perpetual possession and heritage on mankind!

The arrangement of words by great writers on the printed page has sometimes been compared to the arrangement of soldiers on the field; and if it is interesting to see how a great general marshals his regiments, it is certainly not less so to see how the Alexanders and Napoleons of letters marshal their verbal battalions on the battle-fields of thought. Foremost among those who wield despotic swr

over the domain of letters, is my lord Bacon, whose words are like a Spartan phalanx, closely compacted,—almost crowding each other, so close are their files,—and all moving in irresistible array, without confusion or chasm, now holding some Thermopylæ of new truth against some scholastic Xerxes, now storming some ancient Malakoff of error, but always with "victory sitting eagle-winged on their crests." A strain of music bursts on your ear, sweet as is Apollo's lute, and lo! Milton's dazzling files, clad in celestial panoply, lifting high their gorgeous ensign, which "shines like a meteor, streaming to the wind,"—"breathing united force and fixed thought,"—come moving on "in perfect phalanx, to the Dorian mood of flutes and soft recorders." Next comes Chillingworth, with his glittering rapier, all rhetorical rule and flourish, according to the schools,—*passado, montanso, staccato*,—one, two, three,—the third in your bosom. Then stalks along Chatham, with his two-handed sword, striking with the edge, while he pierces with the point, and stuns with the hilt, and wielding the ponderous weapon as easily as you would a flail. Next strides Johnson, with elephantine tread, with the club of logic in one hand and a revolver in the other, hitting right and left with antithetical blows, and, "when his pistol misses fire, knocking you down with the butt end of it." Burke, with lighted linstock in hand, stands by a Lancaster gun; he touches it, and forth there burst, with loud and ringing roar, missiles of every conceivable description,—chain-shot, stones, iron-darts, spikes, shells, grenadoes, torpedoes, and balls, that cut down everything before them. Close after him steals Jeffrey, armed cap-a-pïe,—carrying a tomahawk in one hand and a scalping-knife in the other,—steeped to the eye in fight, cunning of fence, master of his

weapon and merciless in its use, and "playing it like a tongue of flame" before his trembling victims. There is Brougham, slaying half-a-dozen enemies at once with a tremendous Scotch claymore; Macaulay, running under his opponent's guard, and stabbing him to the heart with the heavy dagger of a short, epigrammatic sentence; Hugh Elliot, cracking his enemies' skulls with a sledge-hammer, or pounding them to jelly with his huge fists; Sydney Smith, firing his arrows, feathered with fancy and pointed with the steel of the keenest wit; Disraeli, armed with an oriental scimitar, which dazzles while it kills; Emerson, transfixing his adversaries with a blade of transcendental temper, snatched from the scabbard of Plato; and Carlyle, relentless iconoclast of shams, who "gangs his ain gait," armed with an antique stone axe, with which he smashes solemn humbugs as you would drugs with a pestle and mortar.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECRET OF APT WORDS — (*continued*).

"To acquire a few tongues," says a French writer, "is the task of a few years; but to be eloquent in one is the labor of a life."— COLTON.

When words are restrained by common usage to a particular sense, to run up to etymology, and construe them by a dictionary, is wretchedly ridiculous.— JEREMY COLLIER.

Where do the words of Greece and Rome excel,
That England may not please the ear as well?
What mighty magic's in the place or air,
That all perfection needs must centre there?— CHURCHILL.

IT is an interesting question connected with the subject of style, whether a knowledge of other languages is necessary to give an English writer a full command of his own. Among the arguments urged in behalf of the study of Greek and Latin in our colleges, one of the commonest is the supposed absolute necessity of a knowledge of those tongues to one who would speak and write his own language effectively. The English language, we are reminded, is a composite one, of whose words thirty per cent. are of Roman origin, and nearly five per cent. of Greek; and is it not an immense help, we are asked, to a full and accurate knowledge of the meanings of the words we use, to know their entire history, including their origin? Is not the many-sided Goethe an authority on this subject, and does he not tell us that "wer fremde sprache nicht kennt, weiss nichts von seinen eigenen,"— "He who is acquainted with no foreign tongues, knows nothing of his own"? Have we not the authority of one of the earliest

of English schoolmasters, Roger Ascham, for the opinion that, "even as a hawke fleeth not hie with one wing, even so a man reacheth not to excellency with one tongue"?

In answering the general question in the negative, we do not mean to question the value or profound interest of philological studies, or to express any doubt concerning their utility as a means of mental discipline. The value of classical literature as an instrument of education has been decided by an overwhelming majority of persons of culture. We cannot, without prejudice to humanity, separate the present from the past. The nineteenth century strikes its roots into the centuries gone by, and draws nutriment from them. Our whole literature is closely connected with that of the ancients, draws its inspiration from it, and can be understood only by constant reference to it. As a means of that encyclopedic culture, of that thorough intellectual equipment, which is one of the most imperious demands of modern society, an acquaintance with foreign, and especially with classic, literature, is absolutely indispensable; for the records of knowledge and of thought are many-tongued, and even if a great writer could have wreaked his thoughts upon expression in another language, it is certain that another mind can only in a few cases adequately translate them. It is only by the study of different languages and different literatures, ancient as well as modern, that we can escape that narrowness of thought, that Chinese cast of mind, which characterizes those persons who know no language but their own, and learn to distinguish what is essentially, universally and eternally good and true from what is the result of accident, local circumstances, or the fleeting circumstances of the time. It is useless to say that we know

human nature thoroughly, if we know nothing of antiquity; and we can know antiquity only by study of the originals. Mitford, Grote and Mommsen differ, and the reader who consults them with no knowledge of Greek or Latin is at the mercy of the last author he has perused. It has been frequently remarked that every school of thinkers has it mannerism and its mania, for which there is no cure but intercourse with those who are free from them, and constant access to the models of perfect and immutable excellence which other ages have produced and all ages have acknowledged.

The question, however, is not about the general educational value of classical studies, but whether they are indispensable to him who would write or speak English with the highest force, elegance, and accuracy. We think they are not. In the first place, we deny that a knowledge of the etymologies of words,—of their meanings a hundred or five hundred years ago,—is essential to their proper use now. How am I aided in the use of the word "villain" by knowing that it once meant peasant,—in the use of "wince" by knowing that it meant kick,—in the use of "brat," "beldam," and "pedant," by knowing that they meant, respectively, child, fine lady, and tutor,—in the use of "meddle," by knowing that formerly it had no offensive meaning, and that one could meddle even with his own affairs? Am I more or less likely to use "ringleader" correctly to-day, from learning that Christ is correctly spoken of by an old divine as "the ringleader of our salvation"? Shall I be helped in the employment of the word *musket* by knowing that it was once the name of a small hawk, or in the use of the word *tragedy* by knowing that it is connected in some way with the Greek word for "a goat"?

Facts like these are of deep interest to all, and of high value to the scholar; but how is the knowledge of them necessary that one may speak or write well?

The question with the man who addresses his fellow-man by tongue or pen to-day, is not what ought to be, or formerly was, the meaning of a word, but, what is it *now?* Indeed, it may be doubted whether a reference to the old, obsolete meanings,—the roots and derivations,—of words, does not, as Archbishop Whately insists, tend to confusion, and prove rather a hindrance than a help to the correct use of our tongue. Words not only, for the most part, ride very slackly at anchor on their etymologies, borne, as they are, hither and thither by the shifting tides and currents of usage, but they often break away from their moorings altogether. The knowledge of a man's antecedents may help us sometimes to estimate his present self; but the knowledge of what a word meant three or twenty centuries ago may only mislead us as to its meaning now. "Hypostasis," "substance," and "understanding" are words that etymologically have precisely the same signification; yet have they, as they are now used, the least similarity of meaning? Will it be said that words become more vivid and picturesque,—that we get a firmer and more vigorous grasp of their meaning,—when, as Coleridge advises, we present to our minds the visual images that form their primary meanings? The reply is, that long use deadens us to the susceptibility of such images, and in not one case in a thousand, probably, are they noticed. How many college graduates think of a *miser* as being etymologically a "miserable" man, of a savage, as one living in "a wood," or of a *desultory* reader as one who leaps from one study to another, as a circus rider

leaps from horse to horse? A distinguished poet once confessed that the Latin *imago* first suggested itself to him as the root of the English word "imagination" when, after having been ten years a versifier, he was asked by a friend to define this most important term in the critical vocabulary of his art. "We have had to notice over and over again," says Mr. Whitney in his late work on "The Life and Growth of Language," "the readiness on the part of language-users to forget origins, to cast aside as cumbrous rubbish the etymological suggestiveness of a term, and concentrate force upon the new and more adventitious tie. This is one of the most fundamental and valuable tendencies in name-making; it constitutes an essential part of the practical availability of language."

If a knowledge of Greek and Latin is necessary to him who would command all the resources of our tongue, how comes it that the most consummate mastery of the English language is exhibited by Shakspeare? Will it be said that his writings prove him to have been a classical scholar; that they abound in facts and allusions which imply an intimate acquaintance with the masterpieces of Greek and Roman literature? We answer that this is a palpable begging of the question. By the same reasoning we can prove that scores of English authors, who, we know positively, never read a page of Latin or Greek, were, nevertheless, classical scholars. By similar logic we can prove that Shakspeare followed every calling in life. Lawyers vouch for his acquaintance with law; physicians for his skill in medicine; mad-doctors for his knowledge of the phenomena of mental disease; naturalists assert positively, from the internal evidence of his works, that he was a botanist and an entomologist; bishops, that he was a theo-

logian; and claims have been put forth for his dexterity in cutting up sheep and bullocks. Ben Jonson tells us that he had "small Latin and less Greek"; another contemporary, that he had "little Latin and no Greek." "Small Latin," indeed, it must have been, which a youth could have acquired in his position, who married and entered upon the duties of active life at eighteen. The fact that translations were abundant in the poet's time, and that all the literature of that day was steeped in classicism, will fully account for Shakspeare's knowledge of Greek and Roman history, as well as for the classical turns of expression which we find in his plays.

But it may be said that Shakspeare, the oceanic, the many-souled, was phenomenal, and that no rule can be based on the miracles of a cometary genius who has had no peer in the ages. What shall we say, then, to Izaak Walton? Can purer, more idiomatic, or more attractive English be found within the covers of any book than that of "The Complete Angler"? Among all the controversialists of England, is there one whose words hit harder,—are more like cannon-balls,—than those of Cobbett? By universal concession he was master of the whole vocabulary of invective, and in narration his pen is pregnant with the freshness of green fields and woods; yet neither he, nor "honest Izaak," ever dug up a Greek root, or unearthed a Latin derivation. Again, what shall we say of Keats, who could not read a line of Greek, yet who was the most thoroughly classical of all English authors,—whose soul was so saturated with the Greek spirit, that Byron said "he was a Greek himself." Or what will the classicists do with Lord Erskine, confessedly the greatest forensic orator since Demosthenes? He learned but the

elements of Latin, and in Greek went scarcely beyond the alphabet; but he devoted himself in youth with intense ardor to the study of Milton and Shakspeare, committing whole pages of the former to memory, and so familiarizing himself with the latter that he could almost, like Porson, have held conversations on all subjects for days together in the phrases of the great English dramatist. It was here that he acquired that fine choice of words, that richness of thought, and gorgeousness of expression, that beautiful rhythmus of his sentences, which charmed all who heard him.

If one must learn English through the Greek and Latin, how shall we account for the admirable,—we had almost said, inimitable,—style of Franklin? Before he knew anything of foreign languages he had formed his style, and gained a wide command of words by the study of the best English models. Is the essayist, Edwin P. Whipple, a master of the English language? He was not, we believe, classically educated, yet it would be hard to name an American author who has a greater command of all the resources of expression. His style varies in excellence,—sometimes, perhaps, lacks simplicity; but, as a rule, it is singularly copious, nervous, and suggestive, and clear as a pebbled rill. What is the secret of this command of our tongue? It is his familiarity with our English literature. His sleepless intellect has fed and fattened on the whole race of English authors, from Chaucer to Currer Bell. The profound, sagacious wisdom of Bacon, and the nimble, brilliant wit of Sydney Smith; the sublime mysticism of Sir Thomas Browne, and the rich, mellow, tranquil beauty of Taylor; Jonson's learned sock and Heywood's ease; the gorgeous, organ-toned eloquence of Milton, and the close,

bayonet-like logic of Chillingworth; the sweet-blooded wit of Fuller, and Butler's rattling fire of fun; Spenser's voluptuous beauty, and the lofty rhetoric, scorching wit, and crushing argument of South; Pope's neatness, brilliancy, and epigrammatic point, and Dryden's energy and "full-resounding line"; Byron's sublime unrest and bursts of misanthropy, and Wordsworth's deep sentiment and sweet humanities; Shelley's wild imaginative melody, and Scott's picturesque imagery and antiquarian lore; the polished witticisms of Sheridan, and the gorgeous periods of Burke, — with all these writers, and every other of greater or lesser note, even those in the hidden nooks and crannies of our literature, he has held converse, and drawn from them expressions for every exigency of his thought.

To all these examples we may add one, if possible, still more convincing, that of the late Hugh Miller, who, as Professor Marsh justly remarks, had few contemporaneous superiors as a clear, forcible, accurate and eloquent writer, and who *uses the most cumbrous Greek compounds* as freely as monosyllabic English particles. His style is literally the despair of all other English scientific writers; yet it is positively certain that he was wholly ignorant of all languages but that in which he wrote, and its Northern provincial dialects.

As to the oft-quoted saying of Goethe, to which the objector is so fond of referring, we may say with Professor Marsh, that, "if by knowledge of a language is meant the power of expressing or conceiving the laws of a language in formal rules, the opinion may be well-founded; but, if it refers to the capacity of understanding, and skill in properly using our own tongue, all observation shows it to be very wide of the truth." Goethe himself, the same

authority declares, was an indifferent linguist; he apparently knew little of the remoter etymological sources of his own tongue, or the special philologies of the cognate languages; and "it is difficult to trace any of the excellencies of his marvellously felicitous style to the direct imitation, or even the unconscious influence, of foreign models."* But he was a profound student of the great German writers of the sixteenth century; and hence his works are a test example in refutation of the theory that ascribes so exaggerated a value to classical studies.

It is a remarkable fact, which throws a flood of light upon this subject, that the greatest masters of style in all the ages were the Greeks, who yet knew no word of any language but their own. In the most flourishing period of their literature, they had no grammatical system, nor did they ever make any but the most trivial researches in etymology. The wise and learned nations among the ancients, says Locke, "made it a part of education to cultivate their own, not foreign languages. The Greeks counted all other nations barbarous, and had a contempt for their languages. And though the Greek learning grew in credit amongst the Romans, . . . yet it was the Roman tongue that was made the study of their youth; their own language they were to make use of, and therefore it was their own language they were instructed and exercised in." Demosthenes, the greatest master of the Greek language, and one of the mightiest masters of expression the world has seen, knew no other tongue than his own. He modelled his style after that of Thucydides, whose wonderful compactness, terseness, and strength of diction were derived from no study of old Pelasgic, Phœnician, Persian, or

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other primitive etymologies of the Attic speech,—of which he knew nothing,—but the product of his own marvellous genius wreaking itself upon expression.

No riches are without inconvenience. The men of many tongues almost inevitably lose their peculiar raciness of home-bred utterance, and their style, like their words, has a certain polyglot character. It has been observed by an acute Oxford professor, that the Romans, in exact proportion to their study of Greek, paralyzed some of the finest powers of their own language. Schiller tell us that he was in the habit of reading as little as possible in foreign languages, because it was his business to write *German*, and he thought that, by reading other languages, he should lose his nicer perceptions of what belonged to his own. Dryden attributed most of Cowley's defects to his continental associations, and said that his losses at home overbalanced his gains from abroad. Thomas Moore, who was a fine classical scholar, tells us that the perfect purity with which the Greeks wrote their own language, was justly attributed to their entire abstinence from every other. It is a saying as old as Cicero, that women, being accustomed solely to their native tongue, usually speak and write it with a grace and purity surpassing those of men. "A man who thinks the knowledge of Latin essential to the purity of English diction," says Macaulay, "either has never conversed with an accomplished woman, or does not deserve to have conversed with her. We are sure that all persons who are in the habit of hearing public speaking must have observed, that the orators who are fondest of quoting Latin are by no means the most scrupulous about marring their native tongue. We could mention several members of Parliament, who never fail to

usher in their scraps of Horace and Juvenal with half a dozen false concords."

Mr. Buckle, in his "History of Civilization in England," does not hesitate to express the opinion that "our great English scholars have corrupted the English language by jargon so uncouth that a plain man can hardly discern the real lack of ideas which their barbarous and mottled dialect strives to hide." He then adds that the principal reason why well-educated women write and converse in a purer style than well-educated men, is "because they have not formed their taste according to those ancient classical standards, which, admirable as they are in themselves, should never be introduced into a state of society unfitted for them." To nearly the same effect is the declaration of that most acute judge of style, Thomas De Quincey, who says that if you would read our noble language in its native beauty, picturesque form, idiomatic propriety, racy in its phraseology, delicate yet sinewy in its composition,—you must steal the mail-bags, and break open the women's letters. On the other hand, who has forgotten what havoc Bentley made when he laid his classic hand on "Paradise Lost"? What prose style, always excepting that of the *Areopagitica*, is worse for imitation than that of Milton, with its long, involved, half-rhythmical periods, "dragging, like a wounded snake, their slow length along"? Yet Bentley and Milton, whose minds were imbued, saturated with Greek literature through and through, were probably the profoundest classical scholars that England can boast.

CHAPTER X.

THE FALLACIES IN WORDS.

Gardons-nous de l' équivoque! — PAUL LOUIS COURIER.

Words are grown so false, I am loathe to prove reason with them.— SHAKSPEARE.

The mixture of those things by speech, which by nature are divided, is the mother of all error.— HOOKER.

> One vague inflection spoils the whole with doubt;
> One trivial letter ruins all, left out;
> A knot can choke a felon into clay;
> A knot will save him, spelt without the k;
> The smallest word has some unguarded spot,
> And danger lurks in i without a dot.— O. W. HOLMES.

ON some of the great American rivers, where lumbering operations are carried on, the logs, in floating down, often get jammed up here and there, and it becomes necessary to find the timber which is a kind of keystone and stops all the rest. Once detach this, and away dash the giant trunks, thundering headlong, helter-skelter down the rapids. It is just this office which he who defines his terms accurately, performs for the dead-locked questions of the day. Half the controversies of the world are disputes about words. How often do we see two persons engage in what Cowper calls "a duel in the form of a debate,"— tilting furiously at each other for hours,— slashing with syllogisms, stabbing with enthymemes, hooking with dilemmas, and riddling with sorites,— with no apparent prospect of ever ending the fray, till suddenly it occurs to one of them to define precisely what he means

by a term on which the discussion hinges; when it is found that the combatants had no cause for quarrel, having agreed in opinion from the beginning! The juggle of all sophistry lies in employing equivocal expressions,—that is, such as may be taken in two different meanings, using a word in one sense in the premises, and in another sense in the conclusion. Frequently the word on which a controversy turns is unconsciously made to do double duty, and under a seeming unity there lurks a real dualism of meaning, from which endless confusions arise. Accurately to define such a term is to provide one's self with a master-key which unlocks the whole dispute.

Who is not familiar with the fierce contests of the Nominalists and Realists, which raged so long in the Middle Ages, and which, beginning with words, came at last to blows? Yet, properly understood, they maintained only opposite poles of the same truth; and were, therefore, both right, and both wrong. The Nominalists, it has been said, only denied what no one in his senses would affirm, and the Realists only contended for what no one in his senses would deny; a hair's breadth parted those who, had they understood each other's language, would have had no altercation. Again, who can tell how far the clash of opinions among political economists has been owing to the use in opposite senses of a very few words? Had Smith, Say, Ricardo, Malthus, M'Culloch, Mill, began framing their systems by defining carefully the meanings attached by them to certain terms used on every page of their writings,—such as Wealth, Labor, Capital, Value, Supply and Demand, Over-trading,—it may be doubted whether they would not, to some extent, have harmonized in opinion, instead of giving us theories as opposite as the poles.

How many fallacies have grown out of the ambiguity of the word *money*, which, instead of being a simple and indivisible term, has at least half-a-dozen different meanings! Money may be either specie, bank-notes, or both together, or credit, or capital, or capital offered for loan. A merchant is said to fail "for lack of money," when, in fact, he fails because he lacks credit, capital, or merchandise, money having no more to do with the matter than the carts or railway wagons by which the merchandise is transported. Again: money is spoken of as yielding *interest*, which it cannot do, since wherever it is, whether in a bank, in one's pocket, or in a safe, it is dead capital. The confusion of the terms *wealth* and *money* gave birth to "the mercantile system," one of the greatest curses that ever befell Europe. As in popular language to grow rich is to accumulate *money*, and to grow poor is to lose *money*, this term became a synonyme for *wealth;* and, till recently, at least, all the nations of Europe studied every means of accumulating gold and silver in their respective countries. To accomplish this they prohibited the exportation of money, gave bounties on the importation, and restricted the importation of other commodities, expecting thus to produce "a favorable balance of trade,"—a conduct as wise as that of a shop-keeper who should sell his goods only for money, and hoard every dollar, instead of replacing and increasing his stock, or putting his surplus capital at interest. France, under Colbert, acted upon this principle, and Voltaire extolled his wisdom in thus preferring the accumulation of imperishable bullion to the exchange of it for articles which must, sooner or later, *wear out*. The effect of this fallacy has been to make the nations regard the wealth of their customers as a source of loss instead of

profit, and an advantageous market as a curse instead of a blessing, by which the improvement of Europe has been more retarded than by all other causes put together.

So with the mortal theological wars in which so much ink has been shed. The shelves of our public libraries groan under the weight of huge folios and quartos once hurled at each other by the giants of divinity, which never would have been published but for their confused notions, or failure to discriminate the meaning of certain technical and oft-recurring terms. Beginning with discordant ideas of what is meant by the words Will, Necessity, Unity, Law, Person,—terms vital in theology,—the more they argued, the farther they were apart, and while fancying they were battling with real adversaries, were, Quixote-like, tilting at windmills, or fighting with shadows, till at last utter

> "Confusion umpire sat,
> And by deciding worse embroiled the fray."

The whole vast science of casuistry, which once occupied the brains and tongues of the Schoolmen, turned upon nice, hair-splitting verbal distinctions, as ridiculous as the disputes of the orthodox Liliputians and the heretical Blefuscudians about the big ends and the little ends of the eggs. The readers of Pascal will remember the fierce wars in the Sorbonne between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, touching the doctrine of "efficacious" and "sufficient" grace. The question was, "Whether all men received from God *sufficient grace* for their conversion?" The Jesuits maintained the affirmative; the Jansenists insisted that this *sufficient* grace would never be *efficacious*, unless accompanied by *special* grace. "Then the *sufficient* grace, which is not *efficacious*, is a contradiction in terms," cried the Jesuits; "and, besides, it is a heresy!" We need not trace the

history of the logomachy that followed, which Pascal has immortalized in his "Provincial Letters,"—letters which De Maistre denounces as "Les Menteurs," but which the Jesuits found to be both "sufficient" and "efficacious" for their utter discomfiture. The theological student will recall the microscopic distinctions; the fine-spun attenuations; the spider-like threads of meaning; the delicate, infinitesimal verbal shavings of the grave and angelic doctors; how one subtle disputant, with syllabical penetration, would discover a heresy in his opponent's monosyllables, while the other would detect a schism in the former's conjunctions, till finally, after having filled volumes enough with the controversy to form a library, the microscopic point at issue, which had long been invisible, was whittled down to nothing.

A controversy not less memorable was that which raged in the church in the third and fourth centuries between the "Homoousians" and the "Homoiusians" concerning the nature of Christ. The former maintained that Christ was of the *same* essence with the Father; the latter that he was of *like* essence,—a dispute which Boileau has satirized in these witty lines:

> "D'une *syllabe* impie un saint *mot* augmenté
> Remplit tous les esprits d'aigreurs si meurtrières—
> Tu fis, dans une guerre et si triste et si longue,
> Périr tant de Chrétiens, *martyrs d'une diphthongue!*"

The determination of the controversy depended on the retention or rejection of the diphthong *oi*, or rather upon the change of the letter *o* into *i*; and hence it has been asserted that for centuries Christians fought like tigers, and tore each other to pieces, on account of a single letter. It must be admitted, however, that the dispute, though it related to a mystery above human comprehension, was

something more than a verbal one; and though it is easy to ridicule "microscopic theology," yet it is evident that if error employs it, truth must do the same, even if the distinction be as small as the difference between two animalcules fighting each other among a billion of fellows in a drop of water.

Disraeli remarks, in his "Curiosities of Literature," that there have been few councils or synods where the addition or omission of a word or a phrase might not have terminated an interminable logomachy. "At the Council of Basle, for the convenience of the disputants, John de Secubia drew up a treatise of *undeclined words*, chiefly to determine the significations of the particles *from*, *by*, *but*, and *except*, which it seems were perpetually occasioning fresh disputes among the Hussites and the Bohemians. . . In modern times the popes have more skillfully freed the church from this 'confusion of words.' His holiness on one occasion, standing in equal terror of the Court of France, who protected the Jesuits, and of the Court of Spain, who maintained the cause of the Dominicans, contrived a phrase, where a comma or a full stop, placed at the beginning or the end, purported that his holiness tolerated the opinions which he condemned; and when the rival parties dispatched deputations to the Court of Rome to plead for the period, or advocate the comma, his holiness, in this 'confusion of words,' flung an unpunctuated copy to the parties; nor was it his fault, but that of the spirit of party, if the rage of the one could not subside into a comma, nor that of the other close by a full period!"

The art of treaty-making appears once to have consisted in a kind of verbal sleight-of-hand; and the most dexterous diplomatist was he who had always "an *arrière pensée*,

which might fasten or loosen the ambiguous expression he he had so cautiously and so finely inlaid in his mosaic of treachery." When the American Colonies refused to be taxed by Great Britain, on the ground that they were not represented in the House of Commons, a new term, "*virtual* representation," was invented to silence their clamors. The sophism was an ingenious one; but it cost the mother country a hundred millions sterling, forty thousand lives, and the most valuable of her colonial possessions.

Hume's famous argument against miracles is based entirely upon a *petitio principii*, or begging of the question, artfully concealed in an ambiguous use of the word "experience." In all our experience, he argues, we have never known the laws of nature to be violated; on the other hand, we have had experience, again and again, of the falsity of testimony; consequently we ought to believe that any amount of testimony is false rather than admit the occurrence of a miracle. But *whose* experience does Hume mean? Does he mean the experience of *all* the men that ever lived? If so, he palpably begs the very question in dispute? Does he mean that a miracle is contrary to the experience of *each individual* who has never seen one? This, as Whately shows in his "Logic," would lead to the absurdest consequences. Not only was the King of Bantam justified in listening to no evidence for the existence of ice, but no man would be authorized, on this principle, to expect his own death. His experience informs him directly, only that *others* have died; and, as he has invariably recovered when attacked by disease himself, why, judging by his experience, should he expect any future sickness to be mortal? If, again, Hume means only that a miracle is contrary to the experience of *men generally*, as to

what is common and of ordinary occurrence, the maxim will only amount to this, that false testimony is a thing of common occurrence, and that miracles are not. This is true enough; but "too general to authorize of itself a conclusion in any particular case. In any other individual question as to the admissibility of evidence, it would be reckoned absurd to consider merely the average chances for the truth of testimony in the abstract, without inquiring what the testimony is, in the particular instance before us. As if, *e. g.*, any one had maintained that no testimony could establish Columbus's account of the discovery of America, because it is more common for travelers to lie than for new continents to be discovered."

Again, the terms "experience" and "contrary to experience," imply a contradiction fatal to the whole argument. It is clear that a revelation cannot be founded, as regards the external proof of its reality, upon anything else than miracles; and these events *must* be, in a sense, contrary to nature, by the very definition of the word. If they entered into the ordinary operations of nature,—that is, were subjects of experience,—they would no longer be miracles.

In the very phrase "a violation of nature," so cunningly used by skeptics, there lurks a sophism. The expression seems to imply that they are effects that have no cause; or, at least, effects whose cause is foreign to the universe. But if miracles disturb or interrupt the established order of things, they do so only in the same way that the will of man continually breaks in upon the order of nature. There is not a day, an hour, nor a minute, in which man, in his contact with the material word, does not divert its course, or give a new direction to its order. The order of nature allows an apple-tree to produce fruit; but man can

girdle the tree, and prevent it from bearing apples. The order of nature allows a bird to wing its flight from tree to tree; but the sportsman's rifle brings the bird to the dust. Yet, in spite of this, it is asserted that the smallest conceivable intervention, disturbing the fated order of nature, linked as are its parts indissolubly from eternity in one chain, must break up the entire system of the universe! "If only the free will of man be acknowledged, then," as an able writer says, "this entire sophism comes down in worthless fragments. So long as we allow ourselves to speak *as theists*, then miracles which we attribute to the *will*, the *purpose*, the *power* of God, are not in any sense violations of nature; or they are so in the same sense in which the entireness of our human existence,—our active converse with the material world from morning to night of every day,—is also a violation of nature."

A further and not less fatal objection to Hume's argument is that it confounds the distinction between testimony and authority, between the veracity of a witness and his competency. The miraculous character of an event is not a matter of intuition or observation, but of inference, and cannot be decided by testimony, but only by reasoning from the probabilities of the case. The testimony relates only to the *happening of the event;* the question concerning the *nature* of this event, whether it is, or is not, a violation of physical law, can only be determined by the judgment, after weighing all the circumstances of the case. No event whatever, viewed simply as an event, as an external phenomenon, can be so marvellous that sufficient testimony will not convince us that it has really occurred. A thousand years ago the conversion of five loaves of bread into as many hundred, or the raising of a dead man to life,

would not have appeared more incredible than the transmission of a written message five thousand miles, without error, within a minute of time, or from Europe to America, under the waters of the Atlantic; yet these feats, miraculous as they would once have seemed, have been accomplished by the electric telegraph. Hume's argument against miracles, therefore, which is based entirely upon an appeal to experience and testimony, without reference to the *competency* of the conclusion that the events testified to were supernatural, is altogether inapplicable.*

Hume's argument reminds us of another verbal fallacy,—that which lurks in the phrase *Law of Nature*, which is sometimes used as if it were equivalent to *efficient cause*. There are persons who attempt to account for the phenomena of the universe by the mere agency of physical laws, when there is no such agency, except as a figure of speech. A "Law of Nature" is only a general statement concerning a large number of similar individual facts, which it simply describes, but in no way *accounts for* or explains. It is not the Law of Gravitation which *causes* a stone thrown into the air to fall to the earth; but the fact that the stone so falls, is classed with many other facts, which are comprehended under the general statement called the *Law of Gravitation*. "Second causes," as physical laws are sometimes called, "are no causes at all; they are mere fictions of the intellect, and exist only in thought. A *cause*, in the proper sense of the word, that is, an *efficient* cause, as original and direct in its action, must be a *First* cause; that through which its action is transmitted is not a cause, but a portion of the *effect*,—as it does not act, but is acted upon."

*See Bowen's "Logic," p. 432.

The changes of meaning which words undergo in the lapse of time, and the different senses in which the same word is used in different countries, are a fruitful source of misunderstanding and error. Hence in reading an old author it is necessary to be constantly on our guard lest our interpretations of his words involve a gross anachronism, because his "pure ideas" have become our "mixed modes." The titles of "tyrant," "sophist," "parasite," were originally honorable distinctions; and to attach to them their modern significations would give us wholly false ideas of ancient history. When Bishop Watson, in defending Christianity and the Bible from the attacks of Gibbon and Thomas Paine, entitled his books "An Apology for Christianity" and "An Apology for the Bible," he used the word "apology" in its primitive sense, and was probably understood by many of his readers to be offering an *excuse* for the faults of the Scriptures and of the Christian system, instead of a *vindication* of their truth. When we find an old English writer characterizing his opponent's argument as *impertinent*, we are apt to attach to the word the idea of insolence or rudeness; whereas the meaning is simply *not pertinent* to the question. So a magistrate who "*indifferently* administered justice" meant formerly a magistrate who administered justice *impartially*.

Were we to use the word *gravitation* in translating certain passages of ancient authors, we should assert that the great discovery of Newton had been anticipated by hundreds of years, though we know that these authors had never dreamed of the law which that word recalls to our minds. Most of the terminology of the Christian church is made up of words that once had a more general meaning. *Bishop* meant originally Overseer; *Priest*, or Presbyter,

meant Elder; *Deacon* meant Administrator; and *Sacrament*, a vow of allegiance. In reading the history of France, an American or Englishman is constantly in danger of misapprehension by associating with certain words common to the French and English languages similar ideas. When he reads of *Parliaments* or the *Noblesse*, he is apt to suppose that they resembled the Parliaments and Nobility of England, when their constitution was altogether different.

Mr. J. S. Mill observes that historians, travelers, and all who write or speak concerning moral and social phenomena with which they are unacquainted, are apt to confound in their descriptions things wholly diverse. Having but a scanty vocabulary of words relating to such phenomena, and never having analyzed the facts to which these words correspond in their own country, they apply them to other facts to which they are more or less inapplicable. Thus, as we have before briefly stated, the first English conquerors of Bengal carried with them the phrase *landed proprietor* into a country where the rights of individuals over the soil were extremely different in degree, and even in nature, from those recognized in England. Applying the term with all its English associations in such a state of things,—to one who had only a limited right they gave an absolute right; from another, because he had not an absolute right, they took away all right; drove whole classes of men to ruin and despair; filled the country with banditti; created a feeling that nothing was secure; and produced, with the best intentions, a disorganization which had not been produced in that country by the most ruthless of its barbarian invaders.*

How often, in reading ancient history, are we misled by

* "Logic," Book IV., Chap. 5.

the application of modern terms to past institutions and events! Guizot, in speaking of the towns of Europe between the fifth and tenth centuries, cautions his readers against concluding that their state was one either of positive servitude or of positive freedom. He observes that when a society and its language have lasted a considerable time, its words acquire a complete, determinate, and precise meaning,—a kind of legal official signification. Time has introduced into the signification of every term a thousand ideas, which are suggested to us every time we hear it pronounced, but which, as they do not all bear the same date, are not all suitable at the same time. Thus the terms "servitude" and "freedom" recall to our minds ideas far more precise and definite than the facts of the eighth, ninth, or tenth centuries, to which they relate. Whether we say that the towns in the eighth century were in a state of "freedom" or in a state of "servitude," we say, in either case, too much; for they were a prey to the rapacity of the strong, and yet maintained a certain degree of independence and importance.

So, again, as the same writer shows, the term "civilization" comprises more or fewer ideas, according to the sense, popular or scientific, in which it is used. "The popular signification of a word is formed by degrees, and while all the facts it represents are present. As often as a fact comes before us which seems to answer to the signification of a known term, this term is naturally applied to it, and thus its signification goes on broadening and deepening, till, at last, all the various facts and ideas which, from the nature of things, ought to be brought together and embodied in the term, are collected and embodied in it. When, on the contrary, the signification of a word is

determined by science, it is usually done by one or a very few individuals, who, at the time, are under the influence of some particular fact, which has taken possession of their imagination. Thus it comes to pass that scientific definitions are, in general, much narrower, and, on that very account, much less correct, than the popular significations given to words."

It is this continual incorporation of new facts and ideas,—circumstances originally accidental,—into the permanent significations of words, which makes the dictionary definition of a word so poor an exponent of its real meaning. For a time this definition suffices; but in the lapse of time many nice distinctions and subtle shades of meaning adhere to the word, which whoever attempts to use it with no other guide than the dictionary is sure to confound. Hence the ludicrous blunders made by foreigners, whose knowledge of a language is gained only from books; and hence the reason why, in any language, there are so few exact synonymes.

How many persons who oppose compulsory education, have been frightened by the word "compulsory," attaching to it ideas of tyranny and degradation! How many persons are there in every community, who, in the language of Milton,

> "Bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
> And still revolt when the truth would make them free;
> *License* they mean when they cry *liberty*,
> For who love that, must first be wise and good."

Who can estimate the amount of mischief which has been done to society by such phrases as "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," and other such "rabble-charming words," as South calls them, "which have so much wildfire wrapped up in them"? How many persons who declaim passion-

ately about "the majesty of the people," "the sovereignty of the people," have ever formed for themselves any definite conceptions of what they mean by these expressions? Locke has well said of those who have the words "Wisdom," "Glory," "Grace," constantly at their tongue's end, that if they should be asked what they mean by them, they would be at a stand and know not what to answer. Even Locke himself, who has written so ably on the abuse of words, has used some of the cardinal and vital terms in his philosophy in different senses. La Harpe says that the express object of the entire "Essay on the Human Understanding" is to demonstrate rigorously that *l'entendement est esprit et d'une nature essentiellement distincte de la matière;* yet the author has used the words *reflection, mind, spirit,* so vaguely that he has been accused of holding doctrines subversive of all moral distinctions. Even the eagle eye of Newton could not penetrate the obscurity of Locke's language, and on reading the "Essay" he took its author for a Hobbist. De Maistre declares the title a misnomer; instead of being called an "Essay on the Human Understanding," it should be entitled, he thinks, an "Essay on the Understanding of Locke."

In treating of the difference between *the disgraceful* and *the indecent*, Archbishop Whately observes that the Greeks and the Romans, unfortunately, had not, like ourselves, a separate word for each; *turpe* and *αἰσχρὸς* served to express both. Upon this ambiguity some of the ancient philosophers, especially the Cynics, founded paradoxes, by which they bewildered themselves and their hearers. It is an interesting fact that the Saxon part of our language, containing a smaller percentage of synonymous words that are liable to be confounded, is much freer from equivoca-

tion than the Romanic. Of four hundred and fifty words discriminated by Whately, in his treatise on synonymes, less than ninety are Anglo-Saxon. On the other hand, it has been noted by the same writer that the double origin of our language, from Saxon and Norman, often enables a sophist to seem to render a reason, when he is only repeating the assertion in synonymous words of a different family: *e. g.*, "To allow every man an unbounded freedom of speech, must be always on the whole highly advantageous to the State; for, it is extremely conducive to the interests of the community that each individual should enjoy a liberty perfectly unlimited of expressing his sentiments." So the physician in Molière accounted for opium producing sleep by saying that it had a soporific virtue. Again: there is a large class of words employed indiscriminately, neither because they express precisely the same ideas, nor because they enable the sophist to confound things that are essentially different, but because they convey no distinct ideas whatever, except of the moral character of him who uses them. "Il m'appelle," says Paul Louis Courier, speaking of an opponent, "jacobin, révolutionnaire, plagiaire, voleur, empoissonneur, faussaire, pestiféré ou pestifère, enragé, imposteur, calomniateur, libelliste, homme horrible, ordurier, grimacier, chifonnier, . . Je vois ce qu'il voit dire; il entend que lui et moi sommes d'avis différent."

It is an old trick of controversialists, of which we have already spoken, to employ "question-begging" words that determine disputes summarily without facts or arguments. Thus political parties and religious sects quietly beg the questions at issue between them by dubbing themselves "the Democrats" and "the Republicans," or "the Orthodox" and the "Liberals"; though the orthodoxy of the one

may consist only in opposition to somebody else's doxy, and the liberality of the other may differ from bigotry only in the fact that the bigots are liberal only to *one* set of opinions, while the Liberals are bigoted against all. So with the argument of what is called the Selfish School of Moral Philosophers, who deny that man ever acts from purely disinterested motives. The whole superstructure of their degrading theory rests upon a confounding of the term *self-love* with *selfishness*. If I go out to walk, and, being overtaken by a shower, spread my umbrella to save myself from a wetting, never once, all the while, thinking of my friends, my country, or of anybody, in short, but myself, will it be pretended that this act, though performed exclusively for self, was in any sense selfish? As well might you say that the cultivation of an *art* makes a man *artful;* that one who gets his living by any *craft* is necessarily a *crafty* man; that a man skilled in *design* is a *designing* man; or that a man who forms a *project* is therefore a *projector*. Derivatives do not always retain the force of their primitives. Wearing woolen clothes does not make a man sheepish. A representative does not, and *ought* not, always to represent the will of his constituents, (that is, in the sense of voting as they wish, or being their mere *spokesman;*) for they may clamor for measures opposed to the Constitution, which he has sworn to support. Self-love, in the highest degree, implies no disregard of the rights of others; whereas Selfishness is always sacrificing others to itself,—it contains the germ of every crime, and fires its neighbor's house to roast its own eggs.

What towering structures of fallacy conservatives have been built upon the twofold meaning of the word *old!* Strictly, it denotes the *length* of time that any object has

existed; but it is often employed, instead of "ancient," to denote *distance* of time. Because old men are generally the wisest and most experienced, opinions and practices handed down to us from the "old times" of ignorance and superstition, when the world was comparatively in its youth, it is thought must be entitled to the highest respect. The truth is, as Sydney Smith says, "of living men the oldest has, *ceteris paribus*, the most experience; of generations, the oldest has the least experience. Our ancestors, up to the Conquest, were children in arms; chubby boys in the time of Edward the First; striplings under Elizabeth; men in the reign of Queen Anne; and we only are the white-bearded, silver-headed ancients, who have treasured up, and are prepared to profit by, all the experience which human life can supply." Again: how many tedious books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles have been written to prove that education should consist of mental discipline,—founded on an erroneous derivation of the word from *educere*,—"to draw out." Does education, it is asked, consist in filling the child's mind as a cistern is filled with water brought in buckets from some other source, or in the opening up of its own fountains? The fact is education comes not from *educere*, but from *educare*, which means "to nourish," "to foster," to do just what the nurse does. *Educit obstetrix*, says Cicero, *educat nutrix, instituit pædagogus.* It is food, above all things, which the growing mind craves; and the mind's food is knowledge. Discipline, training, healthful development is, indeed, necessary, but it should form a part only, not usurp the lion's share, of education. In an ideal system this and the nourishing of the mind by wholesome knowledge would proceed simultaneously. The school lesson would *feed* the mind, while the thorough, patient, and

conscientious acquisition of it would *gymnaze* the intellect and strengthen the moral force. Why have one class of studies for discipline only, and another class for nourishment only, when there are studies which at once fill the mind with the materials of thinking and develop the power of thought,— which, at the same time, impart useful knowledge, and afford an intellectual gymnastic? Is a merchant, whose business compels him to walk a dozen miles a day, to be told that he must walk another dozen for the sake of exercise, and for that alone? Yet not less preposterous, it seems to us, is the reasoning of a class of educators who would range on one side the practically useful, and on the other the educational, and build high between them a partition wall.

If a man, by mastering Chillingworth, learns how to reason logically at the same time that he learns the principles of Protestantism, must he study logic in Whately or Jevons? One of the disadvantages of an education of which discipline, pure and simple, is made the end, is that the discipline, being disagreeable, too often ends with the school-days; whereas the discipline gained agreeably, instead of being associated with disgust, would be continued through life. It is possible that the muscular discipline which the gymnasium gives is greater while it lasts than that which is gained by a blacksmith or other laborer in his daily work; but whose muscles are more developed, the man's who practices a few months or years in a gymnasium, or the man's whose calling compels him to use his muscles all his life? What would the graduate of the gymnasium do, if hugged by a London coal-heaver?

Again: the readers of Macaulay's "History of England" will recollect the hot and long-protracted debates in Parlia-

ment in 1696, upon the question whether James II. had "abdicated" or "deserted" the crown,—the Lords insisting upon the former, the Commons upon the latter, term. He will also recall the eloquent and fierce debate by the Lords upon the motion that they should subscribe an instrument, to which the Commons had subscribed, recognizing William as "rightful and lawful king of England." This they refused to do, but voted to declare that he had the right by law to the English crown, and that no other person had any right whatever to that crown. The distinction between the two propositions, observes Macaulay, a Whig may, without any painful sense of shame, acknowledge to be beyond the reach of his faculties, and leave to be discussed by High Churchmen. The distinction between "abdicate" and "desert," however, is an important one, obvious almost at a glance. Had Parliament declared that James had "deserted" the throne, they would have admitted that it was not only his right, but his duty, to return, as in the case of a husband who had deserted his wife, or a soldier who had deserted his post. By declaring that he had "abdicated" the throne, they virtually asserted that he had voluntarily relinquished the crown, and forfeited all right to it forever.

Among the ambiguous words which at this day lead to confusion of thought, one of the most prominent is the word *unity*. There are not a few Christians who confound what the Apostles say concerning "unity of spirit," faith, etc., with unity of church government, and infer, because the church,—that is, the church universal,—is *one*, as having one common Head, one Spirit, one Father, it must, therefore, be one as a *society*. "Church unity" is a good thing, so long as it does not involve the sacrifice of a denomination's life or principles; but there are cases where it

amounts to absorption. It sometimes resembles too closely that peculiar union which the boa-constrictor is so fond of consummating between itself and the goat. It is exceedingly fond of goats; but when the union is complete, there is not a trace of the goat,— it is all boa-constrictor.

Again, how many systems of error in metaphysics and ethics have been based upon the etymologies of words, the sophist assuming that the meaning of a word must always be that which it, or its root, originally bore! Thus Horne Tooke tries to prove by a wide induction that since all particles,— that is, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions,— were originally nouns and verbs, they must be so still; a species of logic which would prove that man, if the Darwinian theory be true, is still a reptile. In a similar way the same writer has reached the conclusion that there is no eternal truth, since *truth*, according to its etymology, is simply what one "troweth," that is, what one thinks or believes. This theory, it is thought, was suggested to Tooke by a conjecture that "if" is equivalent to "gif," an imperative of the verb "to give"; but as it has been shown, from cognate forms in other languages, that this particle has no connection with the verb "to give," or any other verb, "any system founded on this basis is a mere castle in the air." Truth, argues Tooke, supposes mankind; for whom, and *by* whom alone the word is formed, and to whom alone it is applicable. "If no man, then no truth. There is no such thing as eternal, immutable, everlasting truth, unless mankind, *such as they are at present*, be also eternal, immutable, and everlasting. Two persons may contradict each other, and yet both speak truth, for the truth of one person may be opposite to the truth of another."

Even if we admit this derivation of "truth," the con-

clusion does not follow; for whatever the word once meant, it now means that which is certain, whether we think it or not. But this etymology has been disputed by the very highest authority. According to Mr. Garnett, an acute English philologist, "truth" is derived "from the Sanscrit *dhru*, to be established,—*fixum esse*; whence *dhruwa*, certain, i. e. *established*; German, *trauen*, to rely, trust; *treu* faithful, true; Anglo-Saxon, *treow*-treowth (*fides*); English, *true, truth*. To these we may add Gothic, triggons; Icelandic, trygge; (*fidus, securus, tutus*): all from the same root, and all conveying the same idea of stability or security. *Truth*, therefore, neither means what is *thought* nor what is *said*, but that which is *permanent, stable*, and is and ought *to be relied upon*, because, upon sufficient data, it is capable of being demonstrated or shown to exist. If we admit this explanation, Tooke's assertions . . . become *Vox et preterea nihil*."

Some years ago a bulky volume of seven hundred pages octavo was written by Dr. Johnson, a London physician, to prove that "might makes right,"—that justice is the result, not of divine instinct, but purely and simply of arbitrary decree. The foundation for this equally fallacious and dangerous theory was the fact that "right" is derived from the Latin, *rego*, to rule; therefore whatever the *rex*, or ruler, authorizes or decrees, is *right!* As well might he argue that only courtiers can be polite, because "courtesy" is borrowed from palaces, or that there can be no "heaven" or "hell" in the scriptural sense, because, in its etymological, the one is the canopy *heaved* over our heads, and the other is the *hollow* space beneath our feet. Indeed, we have seen an argument, founded on the etymology of the latter word, to prove that there is "no hell beyond a hole

in the ground." In the same way because our primitive vocabulary is derived solely from sensible images, it has been assumed that the mind has no ideas except those derived through the senses, and that therefore thought is only sensation. But neither idealism nor materialism can derive any support from the phenomena of language, for the names we give either to outward objects or to our conceptions of immaterial entities can give us no conception of the things themselves. It is true that in every-day language we talk of color, smell, thickness, shape, etc., not only as sensations within us, but as qualities inherent in the things themselves; but it has long since been shown that they are only modifications of our consciousness. "Things and the senses can no more transmit cognitions to the mind, than a man can transmit to a beggar a guinea that he has not got." If, then, our conception of an object in no way resembles the object,—if heat, for example, can be, in no sense, like a live coal, nor pain like the pricking of a pin,—much less can the word by which we denote an object be other than a mere hieroglyphic, or teach us a jot or tittle about the world of sense or thought. Again: the fact that *spirit* once signified *breath*, and *animus*, ανεμος, air, lends no countenance to materialism. "When we impose on a phenomenon of the physical order a moral denomination, we do not thereby spiritualize matter; and because we assign a physical denomination to a moral phenomenon, we do not materialize spirit." Even if the words by which we designate mental conceptions are derived from material analogies, it does not follow that our conceptions were themselves originally material; and we shall in vain try to account by any external source for the relations of words among themselves. It is told of the metaphysician, Cud-

worth, that, in reply to a person who ridiculed the doctrine of innate ideas, he told him to take down the first book that came to hand in his library, open at random, and read. The latter opened Cicero's "Offices," and began reading the first sentence, "*Quamquam* ——" "Stop!" cried Cudworth, "it is enough. Tell me how through the *senses* you acquire the idea of *quamquam*."

It is a mistake to suppose that a language is no more than a mere collection of words. The terms we employ are symbols only, which can never fully express our thought, but shadow forth far more than it is in their power distinctly to impart. Lastly, there are in every language, as another has truly said, a vast number of words, such as *sacrifice*, *sacrament*, *mystery*, *eternity*, which may be explained by the idea, though the idea cannot be discovered by the word, as is the case with whatever belongs to the mystery of the mind; and this of itself is enough to disprove the conclusion which nominalists would draw from the origin of words, and to prove that, whatever the derivation of "truth," its etymology can establish nothing concerning its essence, and that we are still at liberty to regard it as independent, immutable, and eternal, having its archetype in the Divine mind.

Among the terms used in literary criticism, few are more loosely employed than the word *creative*, as applied to men of genius. Homer, Dante, Shakspeare, are said to have "creative power"; and, as a figure of speech, the remark is true enough; but, strictly speaking, only Omnipotence can *create;* man can only *combine*. The exhaustless imagination of Raphael could fill his gallery with fantastic representations, but every piece of which his paintings are composed exists in nature. To make a

modern statue there is a great melting down of old bronze. The essence of originality is not that it creates new material, or even necessarily invents new combinations of material, but that it imparts new life to whatever it discovers or combines, whether of new or old. Shakspeare's genius is at no other time so incontestably sovereign as when he borrows most,—when he adapts or moulds, in a manner so perfect as to resemble a new creation, the old chronicles and "Italian originals," which have been awaiting the *vivida vis* that makes them live and move. *Non nova, sed nové*, sums up the whole philosophy of the subject. "Originality," says an able writer, "never works more fruitfully than in a soil rich and deep with the foliage of ages."

The word *same* is often used in a way that leads to error. Persons say *the same* when they mean similar. It has been asked whether the ship Argo, in which Jason sought the Golden Fleece, and whose decaying timbers, as she lay on the Greek shore, a grateful and reverent nation had patched up, till, in process of time, not a plank of the original ship was left,—was still *the same* ship as of old. The question presents no difficulty, if we remember that *sameness*, that is, *identity*, is an absolute term, and can be affirmed or denied only in an absolute sense. No man is the same man to-day that he was yesterday, though he may be very similar to his yesterday's self.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FALLACIES IN WORDS — (*continued*).

I never learned rhetorike certain;
Things that I speke, it mote be bare and plain.— CHAUCER.

Here is our great infelicity, that, when single words signify complex ideas, one word can never distinctly manifest all the parts of a complex idea.— ISAAC WATTS.

If reputation attend these conquests which depend on the fineness and niceties of words, it is no wonder if the wit of men so employed should perplex and subtilize the signification of sounds.— LOCKE.

IT has been remarked by Archbishop Whately that "the words whose ambiguity is the most frequently overlooked, and produces the greatest amount of confusion of thought and fallacy are the commonest,"—the very ones whose meaning is supposed to be best understood. "Familiar acquaintance is perpetually mistaken for accurate knowledge." Such a word is *luxury*.

A favorite theme for newspaper declamations in these days is the luxury and extravagance of the American people, especially of the *nouveaux riches* whose fortunes have been of mushroom growth. It is easy to declaim thus against luxury,—that is, against the use of things which, at any particular period, are not deemed indispensable to life, health, and comfort; but what do those who indulge in this cheap denunciation mean by the term? Is not luxury a purely *relative* term? Is there a single article of dress, food or furniture which can be pronounced an absolute luxury, without regard to the wealth or poverty of him who enjoys it? Are not the luxuries of one

generation or country the necessaries of another? Persons who are familiar with history know that Alfred the Great had not a chair to sit down upon, nor a chimney to carry off his smoke; that William the Conqueror was unacquainted with the luxury of a feather bed, if it can be called one; that the early aristocracy of England lived on the ground-floor, without drainage; that in the Middle Ages shirts were deemed a useless superfluity, and men were even put in the pillory for wearing them; that night shirts were esteemed a still more needless luxury, and persons of all ranks and classes slept in the first costume of Adam; that travelling carriages are an ingenious invention of modern effeminacy; that the men who first carried umbrellas in the streets, even in the severest rain-storms, were hooted at as dandies and coxcombs; that the nobles and dames of the most brilliant epochs of England's annals ate with their fingers, generally in couples, out of one trencher on a bare table; and that when forks were introduced, they were long hotly opposed as an extravagance, and even denounced by many as a device of Satan, to offer an affront to Providence, who had provided man with fingers to convey his food to his mouth. In the introduction to Hollinshed's "Chronicles," published in 1577, there is a bitter complaint of the multitude of chimneys lately erected, of the exchange of straw pallets for mattresses or flock beds, and of wooden platters for earthenware and pewter. In another place, the writer laments that oak only is used for building, instead of willow as heretofore; adding, that "formerly our houses indeed were of willow, but our men were of oak; but now that our houses are of oak, our men are not only of willow, but some altogether of straw, which is a sore alteration."

Erasmus tells us that salt beef and strong ale constituted the chief part of Queen Elizabeth's breakfast, and that similar refreshments were served to her in bed for supper. There is not a single able-bodied workingman in Chicago who does not enjoy fare which would have been deemed luxurious by men of high station in the iron reign of the Tudors; hardly a thriving shopkeeper who does not occupy a house which English nobles in 1650 would have envied; hardly a domestic servant or factory girl who does not on Sundays adorn herself with apparel which would have excited the admiration of the duchesses in Queen Elizabeth's ante-rooms. Xenophon accounts for the degeneracy of the Persians by their luxury, which, he says, was carried to such a pitch that they used gloves to protect their hands. Tea and coffee were once denounced as idle and injurious luxuries; and throughout the larger part of the world tooth-brushes, napkins, suspenders, bathing-tubs, and a hundred other things now deemed indispensable to the health or comfort of civilized man, would be regarded as proofs of effeminacy and extravagance.

Luxury has been a favorite theme of satire and denunciation by poets and moralists from time immemorial. But it may be doubted whether in nations or individuals its effects, even when it rages most fiercely, are half so pernicious as those springing from that indifference to comforts and luxuries which is sometimes dignified with the name of contentment, but which is only another name for sheer laziness. While thousands are ruined by prodigality and extravagance, tens of thousands are kept in poverty by indifference to the comforts and ornaments of life,—by a too feeble development of those desires to gratify which the mass of men are striving. It is a bad

sign when a man is content with the bare necessities of life, and aspiring to nothing higher; and equally ominous is it when a nation, however rich or powerful, is satisfied with the capital and glories it has already accumulated. Cry up as we may the virtues of simplicity and frugality, it is yet quite certain that a people content to live upon garlic, macaroni, or rice, are at the very lowest point in the scale both of intellect and morality. A civilized man differs from a savage principally in the multiplicity of his wants. The truth is, man is a constitutionally lazy being, and requires some stimulus to prick him into industry. He must have many difficulties to contend with,—many clamorous appetites and tastes to gratify,—if you would bring out his energies and virtues; and it is because they are always grumbling,—because, dissatisfied amid the most enviable enjoyments, they clamor and strive for more and more of what Voltaire calls *les superflues choses, si nécessaires*,—that the English people have reached their present pinnacle of prosperity, and accumulated a wealth which almost enables them to defy a hostile world.

Among the familiar words that we employ few have been more frequently made the instrument of sophistry than *nature* and *art*. There are many persons who oppose the teaching of elocution, because they like a *natural* and *artless* eloquence, to which, they think, all elaborate training is opposed. Yet nothing is more certain than that Nature and Art, between which there is supposed to be an irreconcilable antagonism, are often the very same thing. What is more natural than that a man who lacks vocal power should cultivate and develop his voice by vocal exercises; or that, if he is conscious of faults in his manner of speaking,—his articulation, gestures, etc.—he should try,

by the help of a good teacher, to overcome them? So with the style of a writer; what is more natural than for one who feels that he has not adequately expressed his thought, to blot the words first suggested and try others, and yet others, till he despairs of further improvement? A conscientious writer is continually transposing clauses, reconstructing sentences, substituting words, polishing and repolishing paragraphs; and this, unquestionably, is *art*, or the application of means to an end. But is this art inconsistent with nature?

Similar to the fallacy which lurks in the words "nature" and "natural," as thus employed, is that which lurks in a popular use of the word *simplicity*. It has been happily said that while some men talk as if to speak naturally were to speak like a Natural, others talk as if to speak with simplicity meant to speak like a simpleton. But what is true "simplicity," as applied to literary composition? Is it old, worn-out commonplace,—"straw that has been thrashed a hundred times without wheat," as Carlyle says,—the shallowest ideas expressed in tame and insipid language? Or is it not rather

> "Nature to advantage dressed,
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed,"

—in other words, a just and striking thought expressed in the aptest and most impressive language? Those persons who declaim against the employment of art in speaking and writing, forget that we are all exceedingly artificial, conventional beings. Without training, a speaker is almost sure to be awkward in gesture and unnatural in utterance. The very preacher who in the street forgets himself and uses the most natural gesticulation and tones, will become self-conscious the moment he ascends the pulpit,

and speak in a falsetto key. It is to get rid of these artificial habits that *art* (which is the employment of proper means) is needed.

How many controversies about the "*transmutation of Species*," and the "*fixity of Species*," would have been avoided, had the scientists who use these phrases fully pondered their meaning, or rather no-meaning! Some writers have tried to explain the law of constancy in transmission, and its independence of the law of variation, by maintaining that it is the Species only, not the Individual, which is reproduced. "Species," says Buffon, "are the only beings in nature." A sheep, it is said, is always and everywhere a sheep, and a man a man, reproducing the *specific type*, but not necessarily reproducing any individual peculiarities. This hypothesis is a striking example of the confusion which results from the introduction of old metaphysical ideas into science. It is evident, as a late writer has clearly shown, that Species cannot reproduce itself, for Species does not exist. It is an entity, an abstract idea, not a concrete fact.

The *thing* Species no more exists than the thing Goodness or the thing Whiteness. "Nature only knows individuals. A collection of individuals so closely resembling each other as all sheep resemble each other, are conveniently classed under one general term, Species; but this general term has no objective existence; the abstract or typical sheep, apart from all concrete individuals, has no existence out of our systems. Whenever an individual sheep is born, it is the offspring of two individual sheep, whose structures and dispositions it reproduces; it is not the offspring of an abstract idea; it does not come into being at the bidding of a type, which as a Species sits

apart, regulating ovine phenomena. . . If, therefore, '*transmutation of Species*' is absurd, '*fixity of Species*' is *not a whit less so.* That which does not exist can neither be transmuted nor maintained in fixity. Only individuals exist; they resemble their parents, and they differ from their parents. Out of these resemblances we create Species; out of these differences we create Varieties; we do so all conveniences of classification, and then believe in the reality of our own figments."*

A popular fallacy, which is partly verbal, is the notion, so tenaciously held by many, that exposure to hardship, and even want, in youth, is the cause of the bodily vigor of those men who have lived to a good age in countries with a rocky soil and a bleak climate. What is more natural, it is argued, than that *hardships* should *harden* the constitution? Look at the Indians: how many of them live till eighty or ninety! Yet no person who reasons thus would think, if engaged in cattle-breeding, of neglecting to feed and shelter his animals in their youth: nor if a dozen men, out of a hundred who had faced a battery, should survive and live to a good age, would he think of regarding the facing of batteries as conducive to longevity. The truth is that early hardships, by destroying all the weak, merely prove the hardiness of the survivors, which latter is the cause, not the effect, of their having lived through such a training. So "loading a gun-barrel to the muzzle, and firing it off, does not *give* it strength: though it proves, if it escape, that it was strong."

The revelations of travelers have dissipated the illusions which once prevailed concerning the hardiness and

* "Westminster Review," September 1853.

health of the Indians and other savages. The savage, it is now known, lives in a condition but one degree above starvation. If he sink below it, he disappears instantaneously, as if he had never been. A certain amount of hardship he can endure; but it has limits, which if he passes, he sinks unnoticed and unknown. There is no registrar or newspaper to record that a unit has been subtracted from the amount of human existence. It is true that severe diseases are rarely seen by casual visitors of savage tribes,—and why? Because death is their doctor, and the grave their hospital. When patients are left wholly to nature, nature presses very hard for an immediate payment of her debt.

An ambiguous word, which has been a source of not a little error, is the adjective *light,* which is used sometimes in a literal, sometimes in a figurative, sense. When writers on Agricultural Chemistry declare that what are called *heavy* soils are always specifically the *lightest*, the statement looks like a paradox. By "heavy" soils are meant, of course, not those which are the weightiest, but those which are ploughed with difficulty,—the effect being like that of dragging a heavy weight. So some articles of food are supposed to be *light of digestion* because they are *specifically light.* Again, there is a popular notion that *strong* drink must make men *strong;* which is a double fallacy, since the word "strong" is applied to alcoholic liquors and to the human body in entirely different senses, and it is assumed that an effect must be like its cause, which is not true.

Another ambiguous term, at least as popularly used, is *murder.* There are persons who assert that the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon, in 1851, was murder in the strictest sense of the term. To send out into the streets of a

peaceful town a party of men dressed in uniform, with muskets and bayonets in their hands, and with orders to kill and plunder, is just as essentially murder and robbery, it is said, as to break into a house with half-a-dozen companions out of uniform, and do the same things. Was not Orsini's crime, they ask, as truly a murder as when a burglar kills a man with a revolver in order to rob him? So, again, there are Christian moralists, who, when asked for proof that suicide is sinful, adduce the Scriptural injunction, "Thou shalt do no murder," assuming that suicide, because it is called self-*murder*, is a species of *murder* in the primary sense of the word. It is evident, however, that most, if not all, of these assertions are founded on palpable fallacies. "Murder" is a technical term, and means the wilful, deliberate killing, without just cause, and without certain specified excuses, of a man who belongs to a settled state of society, in which security is afforded to life and property. In all that is said about the atrocity of murder, there is a latent reference to this state of things. Were the "Vigilance Committee" of San Francisco murderers, when they executed criminals illegally? Are the men who "lynch" horse-thieves on our western frontiers, murderers? Were the rebels who, in our late Civil War, shot down Union soldiers, murderers?

The common sentiment of the civilized world recognizes a vast difference between the rights and duties of sovereigns and subjects, and the relations of nations to each other, on the one hand, and the rights and duties of private individuals on the other; and hence the rules of public and those of private morality must be essentially different. According to legal authority, it is not murder to kill an alien enemy in time of war; nor is it murder

to take away a man's life by perjury. Revolutions and "coups d'état" most persons will admit to be sometimes justifiable; and both, when justifiable, justify a certain degree of violence to person, to property, or to previous engagements. The difficulty is to tell just when, and how far, violence may justify and be justified. It has been well said by an acute and original writer that "it is by no means the same thing whether a man is plundered and wounded by burglars, or by the soldiers of an absolute king who is trying to maintain his authority. The sack of Perugia shocked the sensibilities of a great part of Europe; but if the Pope had privately poisoned one of his friends or servants from any purely personal motive, even the blindest religious zeal would have denounced him as a criminal unfit to live. A man must be a very bitter Liberal indeed, who really maintains that the violation by a Sovereign of his promissory oath of office stands on precisely the same footing as deliberate perjury in an ordinary court of justice." Suicide, it is evident, lacks the most essential characteristic of murder, namely, its *inhumanity*,— the injury done to one's neighbor, and to others, by the *insecurity* they are made to feel. Can a man *rob* himself? If not, how can he, in the proper sense of the word, murder himself?

There is hardly any word which is oftener turned into an instrument of the fallacy of ambiguity than *theory*. There is a class of men in every community of limited education and narrow observation, who, because they have mingled in the world and dealt with affairs, claim to be preëminently *practical* men, and ridicule the opinions of thinkers in their closets as the speculations of "mere *theorists*." In their estimation all theorizing is synony-

mous with visionary speculation; while that which they call "practical knowledge," and which they fancy to be wholly devoid of supposition or guesswork, but which is nothing else than a heap of hasty deductions from scanty and inaccurately observed phenomena, they deem more trustworthy than the discoveries of science and the conclusions of reason. Yet, when correctly defined, this very practical knowledge, so boastfully opposed to theory, in reality presupposes it. True practical knowledge is simply a ready discernment of the proper modes and seasons of applying to the common affairs of life those general truths and principles which are deduced from an extensive and accurate observation of facts, by minds stored with various knowledge, accustomed to investigation, and trained to the art of reasoning; or, in other words, by *theorists*. Every man who attempts to trace the causes or effects of an occurrence that falls under his personal observation, theorizes. The only essential distinction, in most cases, between "practical" men and those whom they denounce as visionary, is, not that the latter alone indulge in speculation, but that the theories of the former are based on the facts of their own experience,—those that happen within a narrow sphere, and in a single age; while the conclusions of the latter are deduced from the *facts of all ages and countries*, minutely analyzed and compared.

Thus the "practical" farmer does not hesitate to consult the neighboring farmers, and to make use of the results of their experience concerning the best soils for certain crops, the best manures for those soils, etc.; yet if another farmer, instead of availing himself of his neighbors' experiences only, consults a book or books containing the digested and classified results of a thousand farmers' experiences

touching the same points, he is called, by a strange inconsistency, "a book-farmer," "a mere theorist." The truth is, the "practical" man, so called, extends his views no farther than the fact before him. Even when he is so fortunate as to learn its cause, the discovery is comparatively useless, since it affords no light in new and more complex cases. The scientific man, unsatisfied with the observation of one fact, collects many, and by tracing the points of resemblance, deduces a comprehensive truth of universal application. "Practical" men conduct the details of ordinary business with a masterly hand. As Burke said of George Grenville, they do admirably well so long as things move on in the accustomed channel, and a new and troubled scene is not opened; but they are not fitted to contend successfully with the difficulties of an untried and hazardous situation. When "the high roads are broken up, and the waters are out," when a new state of things is presented, and "the line affords no precedent," then it is that they show a mind trained in a subordinate sphere, formed for servile imitation, and destined to borrow its lights of another. "Expert men," says Bacon, "can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned."

Among the current phrases of the day, by which men are led into error, one of the commonest is the expression *doing good.* Properly understood, "to do good" is to do right; but the phrase has acquired a technical sense which is much narrower. It means, not discharging faithfully the duties of one's calling, but stepping aside from its routine to relieve the poor, the distressed, and the ignorant, or to reform the sinful. The lawyer who, for a fee, con-

scientiously gives advice, or pleads in the courts, is not thought to be doing good; but he is so regarded if he gratuitously defends a poor man or a widow. A merchant who sells good articles at fair prices, and pays his notes punctually, is not doing good; but he is doing good, if he carries broth and blankets to beggars, teaches in a Sunday School, supports a Young Men's Christian Association, or distributes tracts to the irreligious. Charitable and philanthropic societies of every kind are all recognized as organs for doing good; but the common pursuits of life,—law, medicine, agriculture, manufacturing, trading, etc.—are not.

The incorrectness of this view will be seen if we for a moment reflect what would become of society, including its charitable institutions and philanthropists, should its different members refuse to perform their respective functions. Society is a body corporate, which can exist,—at least, in a healthy state,—only on condition that each man performs the specific work which Providence, or his own sense of his fitness for it, has assigned to him. Thus one man tills the ground; another engages in manufacturing; a third gathers and distributes the produce of labor in its various forms; a fourth loans or exchanges money; a fifth makes or executes laws; and each of these persons, as he is contributing to the general good, is doing good as truly as the most devoted clergyman who labors in the cure of souls, or philanthropist who carries loaves of bread to hovels. To deny this, it has been well said, is to say that a commissariat or transport corps has nothing to do with carrying on a war, and that this business is discharged entirely by the men who stand in line of battle or mount the breach.

The popular theory proceeds upon two assumptions,

both of which are false; first, that the motives which urge men to diligence in their callings are mean and paltry,—that selfishness is the mainspring which causes all the wheels in the great machine of society to revolve; and, secondly, that pursuits which benefit those who prosecute them are necessarily selfish. The truth is, the best work, and a very large part of the work, done in every calling, is done not from a mean and sordid hunger for its emoluments, whether of money, rank, or fame, but from a sincere love for it, and pride in performing its duties well and creditably. The moment a man begins to lose this *esprit de corps*, this high-minded professional pride, and to find his reward in his pay, and not in his work, that moment his work begins to deteriorate, and he ceases to meet with the highest success. If pursuits which benefit those who follow them are necessarily selfish, then philanthropy itself is selfish, for its rewards, in popular estimation, are of the noblest kind. No sane man will depreciate the blessings that result from the labors of the Howards, the Frys, and the Nightingales; but they bear the same relation to the ordinary pursuits of life that medicine bears to food. Doctors and surgeons are useful members of society; but their services are less needed than those of butchers and bakers. Let the farmer cease to sow and reap, let the loom and the anvil be forsaken, and the courts of justice be closed, and not only will the philanthropist starve, but society will speedily become a den of robbers, if it does not utterly cease to exist.

Mr. Mill notices an ambiguity in the word *right*, which has been made the occasion of an ingenious sophism. A man asserts that he has a right to publish his opinions, which may be true in one sense, namely, that it would be

wrong in any *other* person to hinder or prevent their publication; but it does not follow that, in publishing his opinions, he is *doing right*, for this is an entirely distinct proposition from the other. Its truth depends upon two things; first, whether he has taken due pains to ascertain that the opinions are true, and second, whether their publication in this manner, and at this time, will probably be beneficial to the interests of truth on the whole. Another sophism, based on the ambiguity of the same word, is that of confounding a right of any kind with a right to enforce that right by resisting or punishing any violation of it, as in the case of a people whose right to good government is ignored by tyrannical rulers. The right or liberty of the people to turn out their rulers, is so far from being the same thing as the other, that "it depends upon an immense number of varying circumstances, and is altogether one of the knottiest questions in practical ethics."

No two terms are more frequently confounded in these days than *piety* and *religion*. Not a few persons think they are religious because they have pious inclinations, which no more necessarily follows than that a man has learning or money because he has a desire for learning or money. It has been well said that a man has not a religion simply by having pious inclinations, any more than he has a country simply by having philanthropy. A man has not a country until he is a citizen of the State, until he undertakes to follow and uphold certain laws; to obey certain magistrates, and to adopt certain ways of acting and living.

Montaigne complains with good reason that too many definitions, explanations, and replies to difficult questions,

are purely verbal. "I demand what *nature* is, what pleasure, circle, and substition are? The question is about words, and is answer'd accordingly. A stone is a body; but if a man should further urge, and what is body? Substance; and what is substance? and so on, he would drive the respondent to the end of his calepin. We exchange one word for another, and ofttimes for one less understood. I better know what man is, than I know what animal is, or mortal, or rational. To satisfie one doubt, they pop me in the mouth with three; 'tis the Hydra's head."*

From all this it will be seen that our words are, to a large extent, carelessly employed,—the signs of crude and indefinite generalizations. But even when the greatest care is taken in the employment of words, it is nearly impossible to choose and put them together so exquisitely that a sophist may not wrest and pervert their meaning. Those persons who have ever had a lawsuit need not be told how much ingenious argument may hang on a shade of meaning, to be determined objectively without reference to the fancied intentions of the legislator or the writer. If, in ordinary life, words represent impressions and ideas, in legal instruments they are *things;* they dispose of property, liberty, and life; they express the will of the law-giver, and become the masters of our social being. Yet so carelessly are they used by lawyers and legislators, that half the money spent in litigation goes to determine the meanings of words and phrases. O'Connell used to assert that he could drive a coach-and-six through an Act of Parliament. Many of our American enactments yawn with chasms wide enough for a whole railway train. But even when laws have been framed with the most consum-

* "Essays," Cotton's edition.

mate skill, the subtlety of a Choate or a Follett may twist what appears to be the clearest and most unmistakable language into a meaning the very opposite to that which the common sense of mankind would give it.

We have heard Judge Story make the following statement to show the extreme difficulty of framing a statute so as to avoid all ambiguity in its language. Being once employed by Congress to draft an important law, he spent six months in trying to perfect its phraseology, so that its sense would be clear beyond a shadow of a doubt, leaving not the smallest loophole for a lawyer to creep through. Yet, in less than a year, after having heard the arguments of two able attorneys, in a suit which came before him as a Judge of the United States Supreme Court, he was utterly at a loss to decide upon the statute's meaning!

A signal illustration of the ambiguity that lurks in the most familiar words, is furnished by a legal question that was fruitful of controversy and "costs" not long ago in England. An English nobleman, Lord Henry Seymour, who lived in Paris many years, executed a will in 1856, wherein he made a bequest of property worth seventy thousand pounds to the hospitals of London and Paris. No sooner was it known that he was dead, than the question was raised, what does "London" mean? Where are its limits, and what is its area? What does it contain, and what does it exclude? Four groups of claimants appeared, each to some extent opposed by the other three. Group the first said, "The gift is obviously confined to the *City* proper of London,"—that is, "London within the walls," comprising little more than half of a square mile. "Not so," protested group the second; "it extends to all the hospitals within the old bills of mortality,"—that is,

London, Westminster, Southwark, and about thirty out-parishes, but excluding Marylebone, St. Pancras, Paddington, Chelsea, and everything beyond. Group the third insisted that "London" included "All the area within the metropolitan boroughs"; while group the fourth, for cogent reasons of their own, were positive that the testator meant, and the true construction was, nothing less than the whole area included within the Registrar-General's and the Census Commissioner's interpretation of the word "Metropolis." The Master of the Rolls decided that the testator meant to use the word "London" in its full, complete, popular sense, as including all the busily-occupied districts of what is usually called the Metropolis, as it existed in the year when the will was made. No sooner, however, was this vexed question settled, than another, hardly less puzzling, arose,—namely, What is a "Hospital"? Nearly every kind of charitable institution put in its claim; but it was finally decided that only such charities should share in the bequest as fell within the definition of the French word *hospice* used in the will.

Another perplexing question which came before the English courts some years ago, and which not less vividly shows the importance of attention to the words we use, related to the meaning of the word *team*, as used by writers generally, and used in a written agreement. A certain noble duke made an agreement with one of his tenants in Oxfordshire concerning the occupancy of a farm, and a portion of the agreement was couched in the following terms: "The tenant to perform each year for the Duke of ——, at the rate of one day's team-work, with two horses and one proper person, for every fifty pounds of rent, when required (except at hay or corn

harvest), without being paid for the same. In other words, the rent of the farm was made up of two portions, the larger being a money payment, and the former a certain amount of farm service. All went on quietly and smoothly in reference to this agreement, until one particular day, when the duke's agent or bailiff desired the farmer to send a cart to fetch coals from a railway station to the ducal mansion. "Certainly not," said the farmer. "I'll send the horses and a man, but you must find the cart." "Pooh, pooh! what do you mean? Does not your agreement bind you to do team-work occasionally for his Grace?" "Yes, and here's the team; two horses and a careful man to drive them." "But there can't be a team without a cart or wagon." "O yes, there can, the horses are the team." "No, the horses and cart together are the team."

The question which the court was called on to decide in the lawsuit which followed, was,—what is a *team?* The case was at first tried at Oxford, before a common jury, who gave a verdict substantially for the duke. A rule was afterwards obtained, with a view to bring the question of definition before the judges at the Court of Queen's Bench. The counsel for the duke contended that as team-work cannot be done by horses without a cart or wagon, it is obvious that a team must include a vehicle as well as the horses by which it is to be drawn. Mr. Justice A said that, in the course of his reading, he had met with some lines which tend to show that the team is separate from the cart,—

"Giles Jelt was sleeping, in his cart he lay;
Some waggish pilf'rers stole his team away.
Giles wakes and cries, 'Ods Bodikins, what's here?
Why, how now; am I Giles or not?
If he, I've lost six geldings to my smart;
If not, Ods Bodikins, I've found a cart.'"

Mr. Justice B quoted a line from Wordsworth,—

"My jolly team will work alone for me,"

as proving the farmer's interpretation, seeing that, though horses might possibly be jolly, a cart cannot. The counsel for his Grace urged that the dictionaries of Johnson and Walker both speak of a team as "a number of horses drawing the same carriage." "True," said Justice A, "do not these citations prove that the team and the carriage are distinct things?" "No," replied the counsel on the duke's side; "because a team without a cart would be of no use." He cited the description given by Cæsar of the mode of fighting in chariots adopted by the ancient Britons, and of the particular use and meaning of the word *temanem*. From Cæsar he came down to Gray, the English poet, and cited the lines,—

"Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe hath broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield,
How bowed the wood beneath their sturdy stroke;"

and from Gray he came down to the far-famed "Bull Run" affair in the recent American Civil War, a graphic account of which told that "the teamsters cut the traces of the horses."

The counsel for the farmer, on the other hand, referred to Richardson's English dictionary, and to Bosworth's Anglo-Saxon dictionary, for support to the assertion that a team implies only the horses, not the vehicle also; and he then gave the following citations to the same effect from Spenser:

"Thee a ploughman all unmeeting found,
As he his toilsome team that way did guide,
And brought thee up a ploughman's s'ate to bide."

From Shakspeare,—

"We fairies that do run,
By the triple Hecat's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream."

Again from Shakspeare,—

"I am in love, but a team of horse shall
Not pluck that from me, nor who 't is I love."

From Dryden,—

"He heaved with more than human force to move
A weighty straw, the labor of a team."

Again from Dryden,—

"Any number, and passing in a line:
Like a long team of snowy swans on high,
Which clap their wings and cleave the liquid sky."

Spenser, Roscommon, Martineau, and other authorities, were also cited to the same purport, and all the light which English literature could throw upon the point was converged upon it. The learned judges were divided in their opinions, one deciding that the word "team" clearly implied the cart as well as the horses, two other judges deciding that it was enough if the farmer sent the horse and the driver to be put to such service as the duke's agent might please. The arguments by which each supported his conclusion were so acute, cogent, and weighty, that their disagreement seems to have been inevitable.

Hobbes, in a memorable passage in the "Leviathan," from which we have already quoted, says: "Seeing that truth consisteth in the right ordering of names in our affirmations, a man that seeketh precise truth had need to remember what every name he useth stands for, and to place it accordingly; or else he will find himself entangled in words as a bird in limetwigs,—the more he struggles,

the more belimed. Words are wise men's counters,—they do but reckon by them; but they are the money of fools, that value them by the authority of an Aristotle, a Cicero, a Thomas, or any other doctor whatsoever." Fuller quaintly suggests that the reason why the Schoolmen wrote in so bald a style was, "that the vermin of equivocation might not hide themselves in the nap of their words." The definition of words has been often regarded as a mere pedagogue's exercise; but when we call to mind the persecutions, proscriptions, tortures, and even massacres, which have resulted from mistakes about the meaning of certain words, the office of the lexicographer assumes a grave and dignified aspect. It is not enough, however, in guarding against error, to discriminate our words, so as to understand their exact force. We must also keep constantly in mind the fact that language, when used with the utmost precision, is at best but an imperfect representation of thought. Words are properly neither the "names of things," as modern writers have defined them, nor, as the ancients viewed them, the "pictures of ideas." The most they can do is to express the *relations* of things; they are, as Hobbes said, "the signs of our conceptions," serving as a mark to recall to ourselves the likeness of a former thought, and as a sign to make it known to others.

Even as the signs of our conceptions, they are at best imperfect and unsatisfactory, representing only approximately what we think, and never coördinating with the conceptions they are used to represent. "Seizing on some characteristic mark of the conception, they always express too little or too much. They are sometimes distinctly metaphorical, sometimes indefinitely assertive; sometimes too concrete, sometimes too abstract." Our sentences are

not images of thought, reflected in a perfect mirror, nor photographs which lack coloring only; they are but the merest skeleton of expression, hints of meaning, tentative signs, which can put another only into a partial possession of our consciousness. To apprehend perfectly the thought of another man, even one who uses language with the utmost nicety and accuracy, we need to know his individuality, his entire past history; we must interpret and supplement his meaning by all that we know of his intellectual and moral constitution, his ways of thinking, feeling, and speaking; we must be *en rapport* with him; and even then we may fail to penetrate to the central meaning of his words, the very core of his thought.

The soul of every man is a mystery which no other man can fathom; we are, as one has said, spirits in prison, able only to make signals to each other, but with a world of things to think and say which our signals cannot describe at all. There is hardly an abstract term in any language which conveys precisely the same meaning to two different minds; every word is sure to awaken in one mind more or less different associations from those it awakens in another. Words mean the same thing only to persons who are psychologically the same, and who have had the same experiences. It is obvious that no word can explain any sensation, pleasant or painful, to one who has never felt the sensation. When Saunderson, who was born blind, tried to define *red*, he compared that color to the blowing of a trumpet, or the crowing of a cock. In like manner a deaf man in England, in trying to describe the sound of a trumpet, said that it was *red*. The statement that words have to two persons a common meaning only when they suggest ideas of a common experience, is true even of

the terms we stop to ponder; how much more true, then, of words whose full and exact meaning we no more pause to consider, than we reflect that the gold eagle which passes through our hands is a thousand cents. Try to ascertain the meaning of the most familiar words which are dropping from men's lips, and you find that each has its history, and that many are an epitome of the thoughts and observations of ages.

What two persons, for example, attach the same meaning to the words *democracy*, *conservatism*, *radicalism*, *education?* What is the meaning of *gentleman*, *comfortable*, *competence?* De Quincey says that he knew several persons in England with annual incomes bordering on twenty thousand pounds, who spoke of themselves, and seemed seriously to think themselves, "unhappy paupers." Lady Hester Stanhope, with an income of two thousand seven hundred pounds a year, thought herself an absolute pauper in London, and went to live in the mountains of Syria; "for how, you know," she would say pathetically, "could the humblest of spinsters live decently on that pittance?" Do the amiable and the revengeful, the chaste and the licentious, mean the same thing when they speak of *love* or *hate?* With what precious meaning are the words *home* and *heaven* flooded to some persons, and with what icy indifference are they heard by others?

So imperfect is language that it is doubtful whether such a thing as a self-evident verbal proposition, the absolute truth of which can never be contested, is possible; for it can never be absolutely certain what is the meaning of the words in which the proposition is expressed, and the assertion that it is founded on partial observation, or that the words imperfectly express the observation on which it is

founded, or are incomplete metaphors, or are defective in some other respect, must always be open to proof. Thus, for example, a late writer, criticising Mr. Mansel's doctrine of consciousness, in his "Metaphysics," asks: "What is meant by any one of the words which enter into the propositions asserted by Mr. Mansel to be absolutely and eternally true? Consciousness, he says, assures me of my own existence. But no one, as Mr. Mansel would say, is 'presentatively' or directly conscious of a proposition. No one feels that the words 'I exist' are absolutely true. What we all feel is something which we describe by those words, not because we know that they are absolutely true, but because we have always been accustomed to hear them. Our direct consciousness neither does nor can decide whether any and what ambiguities and mysteries lurk in the two words, 'I' and 'exist,' any more than that part of our consciousness to which we give the name of a perception of water tells us of whether water is or is not composed of oxygen and hydrogen. What that is to which the word 'I' is affixed, is a boundless question. The word 'exist' is a mere metaphor. No one could say that he was conscious of the proposition 'I stand out;' and who can say what is the exact distance from its original meaning to which the word has traveled?"

Even words that designate outward, material objects, cognizable by the senses, do not always call up similar thoughts in different minds. The meaning they convey depends often upon the mental qualities of the hearer. Thus the word *sun* uttered to an unlettered man of feeble mental powers, conveys simply the idea of a ball of light and heat, which rises in the sky in the morning, and goes down at evening; but to the man of vivid imagina-

tion, who is familiar with modern scientific discoveries, it suggests, more or less distinctly, all that science has revealed concerning that luminary. If we estimate words according to their etymological meaning, we shall still more clearly see how inadequate they are in themselves to involve the mass of facts which they connote,—"as inadequate as is a thin and worthless bit of paper which yet may represent a thousand pounds. . . Take a word expressive of the smallest possible modification of matter,—a word invented in the most expressive language in the world, and invented by no less eminent a philosopher than Democritus, and that, too, with great applause,—the word *atom*, meaning that which cannot be cut. Yet simple as is the notion to be expressed, and great as were the resources at command, what a failure the mere *word* is! It expresses too much and too little, too much as being applicable to other things, and consequently ambiguous; too little, because it does not express all the properties even of an atom. Its inadequacy cannot be more forcibly illustrated than by the fact that its precise Latin equivalent is by us confined to the single acceptation 'insect!'"*

But if words are but imperfect symbols for designating material objects, how much more unequal must they be to the task of expressing that which lies above and behind matter and sensation,—especially as all abstract terms are metaphors taken from sensible objects! How many feelings do we have, in the course of our lives, which beggar description! How many apprehensions, limitations, distinctions, opinions are clearly present, at times, to our consciousness, which elude every attempt to give them verbal expression! Even the profoundest thinkers and the

* "Chapters on Language," by F. W. Farrar.

most accurate, hair-splitting writers, who weigh and test to the bottom every term they use, are baffled in the effort so to convey their conclusions as to defy all misapprehension or successful refutation. Beginning with definitions, they find that the definitions themselves need defining; and just at the triumphant moment when the structure of argument seems complete and logic-proof, some lynx-eyed adversary detects an inaccuracy or a contradiction in the use of some keystone term, and the whole magnificent pile, so painfully reared, tumbles into ruins.

The history of controversy, in short, in all ages and nations, is a history of disputes about words. The hardest problems, the keenest negotiations, the most momentous decisions, have turned on the meaning of a phrase, a term, or even a particle. A misapplied or sophistical expression has provoked the fiercest and most interminable quarrels. Misnomers have turned the tide of public opinion; verbal fallacies have filled men's souls with prejudice, rage, and hate; and "the sparks of artful watchwords, thrown among combustible materials, have kindled the flames of deadly war and changed the destiny of empires."

CHAPTER XII

NICKNAMES.

The word nick in nickname is cognate with the German word *necken*, to mock, to quiz, and the English word *nag*, to tease, or provoke.—W. L. BLACKLEY, *Word-Gossip*.

A good name will wear out, a bad one may be turned; a nickname lasts for ever.—ZIMMERMAN.

J'ai été toujours étonné, que les Familles qui portent un Nom odieux ou ridicule, ne le quittent pas.—BAYLE.

AMONG the books that need to be written, one of the most instructive would be a treatise on the history and influence of nicknames. Philosophers who study the great events in the world's history, are too apt, in their eagerness to discover adequate causes, to overlook the apparently trifling means by which mankind are influenced. They are eloquent enough upon the dawning of a new idea in the world when its effects are set forth in all the pomp of elaborate histories and disquisitions; but they would do a greater service by showing how and when, by being condensed into a pithy word or phrase, it wins the acceptance of mankind. The influence of songs upon a people in times of excitement and revolution is familiar to all. "When the French mob began to sing the Marseillaise, they had evidently caught the spirit of the Revolution; and what a song is to a political essay, a nickname is to a song." In itself such a means of influence may seem trivial; and yet history shows that it is no easy thing to estimate the force of these ingenious appellations.

In politics, it has long been observed that no orator can compare for a moment in effect with him who can give apt and telling nicknames. Brevity is the soul of wit, and of all eloquence a nickname is the most concise and irresistible. It is a terse, pointed, short-hand mode of reasoning, condensing a volume of meaning into an epithet, and is especially popular in these days of steam and electric telegraphs, because it saves the trouble of thinking. There is a deep instinct in man which prompts him, when engaged in any controversy, whether of tongue or pen, to assume to himself some honorable name which begs the whole matter in dispute, and at the same time to fasten on his adversary a name which shall render him ridiculous, odious, or contemptible. By facts and logic you may command the assent of the few; but by nicknames you may enlist the passions of the million on your side. Who can doubt that when, in the English civil wars, the Parliamentary party styled themselves "the Godly" and their opponents "the Malignants," the question at issue, wherever entrance could be gained for these words, was already decided? Who can estimate how much the Whig party in this country was damaged by the derisive sarcasm, "All the decency," or its opponents by the appellation of "Locofocos"? Is it not certain that the odious name, "Copperheads," which was so early in our late Civil War affixed to the Northern sympathizers with the South, had an incalculable influence in gagging their mouths, and in preventing their numbers from multiplying?

It has been truly said that in the distracted times of early revolution, any nickname, however vague, will fully answer a purpose, though neither those who are blackened by the odium, nor those who cast it, can define the hateful

appellative. When the term "delinquents" came into vogue in England, "it expressed a degree and species of guilt," says Hume, "not easily known or ascertained. It served, however, the end of those revolutionists who had coined it, by involving any person in, or coloring any action by, 'delinquency'; and many of the nobility and gentry were, without any questions being asked, suddenly discovered to have committed the crime of 'delinquency.'" The degree in which the political opinions of our countrymen were influenced, and their feelings embittered, some forty years ago, by the appellation "Federalist" cannot be easily estimated. The fact that many who heard the derisive title knew not its origin, and some not even its meaning, did not lessen its influence,—as an incident related by Judge Gaston of North Carolina well illustrates. In travelling on his circuit through the backwoods of that State, he learned that the people of that town had elected a Democrat, in place of a Whig, to serve them in the legislature. When asked the reason of this change, his informant, an honest, rough-looking citizen, replied: "Oh, we didn't reëlect Mr. A, because he is a *fetheral.*" "A fetheral!" exclaimed the judge, "what is a fetheral?" "I don't know," was the reply, "but *it aint a human.*"

There is no man so insignificant that he may not blast the reputation of another by fastening upon him an odious or ludicrous nickname. Even the most shining character may thus be dragged down by the very reptiles of the race to the depths of infamy. A parrot may be taught to call names, and, if you have a spite against your neighbor, may be made to give him a deal of annoyance, without much wit either in the employer or the puppet. Hotspur would have had a *starling* taught to speak nothing but

Mortimer in the ears of his enemy. An insulting or degrading epithet will stick to a man long after it has been proved malicious or false. Who could dissociate with the name of Van Buren the idea of craft or cunning, after he had become known as the "Kinderhook Fox," or who ever venerated John Tyler as the Chief Magistrate of the nation, after he had been politically baptized as "His Accidency"? Who can tell how far Gen. Scott's prospects for the Presidency were damaged by the contemptuous nickname of "Old Fuss and Feathers,"—especially after he had nearly signed his own political death-warrant by that fatal allusion to "a hasty plate of soup," which convulsed the nation with laughter from the St. Croix to the Rio Grande? The hero of Chippewa found it hard to breast the torrent of ridicule which this derisive title brought down upon him. It would have been easier far to stand up against the iron shock of the battle-field. Who, again, has forgotten how a would-be naval bard of America was "damned to everlasting fame" by a verbal tin-pail attached to his name in the form of one of his own verses?* "I have heard an eminent character boast," says Hazlitt, "that he did more to produce the war with Bonaparte by nicknaming him *The Corsican*, than all the state papers and documents on the subject put together." Give a dog a bad name, says the proverb, and you hang him. It was only necessary to nickname Burke *The Dinner Bell* to make even *his* rising to speak a signal for a general emptying of the house.

The first step in overthrowing any great social wrong is to fix upon it a name which expresses its character. From the hour when "taxation without representation" came to

* "The sun has gone down with his battle-stained eye."

be regarded by our fathers as a synonyme for *tyranny,* the cause of the colonies was safe. Had the Southern slaves been called by no other name than that used by their masters,—namely, *servants,*—they would have continued in bondage till they had won their freedom by the sword.

The French Revolution of 1789 was fruitful of examples showing the ease with which ignorant men are led and excited by words whose real import and tendency they do not understand, and illustrating the truth of South's remark, that a plausible and insignificant word in the mouth of an expert demagogue is a dangerous and destructive weapon. Napoleon was aware of this, when he declared that "it is by epithets that you govern mankind." Destroy men's reverence for the names of institutions hoary with age, and you destroy the institutions themselves. "Pull down the nests," John Knox used to say, "and the rooks will fly away." The people of Versailles insulted with impunity in the streets, and at the gates of the Assembly, those whom they called *Aristocrats;* and the magic power of the word was doubled, when aided by the further device of calling the usurping Commons the *National Assembly.* When the title of *Frondeurs*, or "the Slingers," was given to Cardinal de Retz's party, he encouraged its application, "for we observed," says he, "that the distinction of a name healed the minds of the people." The French showman, who, when royalty and its forms were abolished in France, changed the name of his "*Royal* Tiger," so called,—the pride of his menagerie,—to "*National* Tiger," showed a profound knowledge of his countrymen and of the catchwords by which to win their patronage.

A nickname is the most stinging of all species of satire, because it gives no chance of reply. Attack a man with specific, point-blank charges, and he can meet and repel them; but a nickname baffles reply by its very vagueness; it presents no tangible or definite idea to the mind, no horn of a dilemma with which the victim can grapple. The very attempt to defend himself only renders him the more ridiculous; it looks like raising an ocean to drown a fly, or discharging a cannon at a wasp, to meet a petty gibe with formal testimony or elaborate argument. Or, if your defence is listened to without jeers, it avails you nothing. It has no effect,—does not tell,—excites no sensation. The laugh is against you, and all your protests come like the physician's prescription at the funeral, too late.

The significance of nicknames is strikingly illustrated by the fact that, as a late writer suggests, you cannot properly hate a man of different opinions from your own till you have labelled him with some unpleasant epithet. In theological debates, a heretic may be defined as a man with a nickname. Till we have succeeded in fastening a name upon him, he is confounded among the general mass of the orthodox; his peculiarities are presumably not sufficient to constitute him into a separate species. But let the name come to us by a flash of inspiration, and how it sticks to the victim through his whole life! There is a refinement of cruelty in some nicknames which resembles the barbarity of the old heathen persecutors, who wrapped up Christians in the skins of wild beasts, so that they might be worried and torn in pieces by dogs. "Do but paint an angel black," says an old divine, "and that is enough to make him pass for a devil." On the other hand,

there are loving nicknames, which are given to men by their friends,— especially to those who are of a frank, genial, companionable nature. The name of Charles Lamb was ingeniously transformed into the Latin diminutive *Carlagnulus*; and the friends of Keats, in allusion to his occasional excess of fun and animal spirits, punned upon his name, shortening it from John Keats into "Junkets."

That prince of polemics, Cobbett, was a masterly inventor of nicknames, and some of his felicitous epithets will not be forgotten for many years to come. Among the witty labels with which he ticketed his enemies were "Scorpion Stanley," "Spinning Jenny Peel," "the pink-nosed Liverpool," "the unbaptized, buttonless blackguards," (applied to the Quakers,) and "Prosperity Robinson." The nickname, "Old Glory," given by him, stuck for life to Sir Francis Burdett, his former patron and life-long creditor. "Æolus Canning" provoked unextinguishable laughter among high and low; and it is said that of all the devices to annoy the brilliant but vain Lord Erskine, none was more teasing than being constantly addressed by his second title of "Baron *Clackmannon*."

The meaning of nicknames, as of many other words, is often a mystery. Often they are apparently meaningless, and incapable of any rational explanation; yet they are probably due, in such cases, to some subtle, imperceptible analogy, of which even their authors were hardly conscious. When the English and French armies were encamped in the Crimea, they, by common consent, called the Turks "Bono Johnny"; but it would not be easy to tell why. A late French prince was called "Plomb-plomb"; yet there is no such word in the French language, and different accounts have been given of its origin. To explain, again,

why nicknames have such an influence,—so magical an effect,—is equally difficult; one might as well try to explain why certain combinations of colors or musical sounds impart an exquisite pleasure. All we know, upon both these points, is, that certain persons are doomed to be known by a nickname; at the time of life when the word-making faculty is in the highest activity, all their acquaintances are long in labor to hit off the fit appellation; suddenly it comes like an electric spark, and it is felt by everybody to be impossible to think of the victim without his appropriate designation. In vain have his godfathers and godmothers called him Robert or Thomas; "Bob," or "Tom," or something wholly unrelated to these, he is fated to be to the end of his days.

Many of the happiest of these headmarks, which stick like a burr from the moment they are invented, are from sources utterly unknown; they appear, they are on everybody's lips, but whence they came nobody can tell. One of the commonest ways in which nicknames are suggested is by some egregious blunder which one makes. Thus, a schoolboy is asked who demolished Carthage, and answering "Scorpio Africanus," is promptly nicknamed "Old Scorp." Another way is by a glaring contradiction between a man's name and his character,—when he is ridiculed as sailing under false colors, or claiming a merit which does not belong to him. There is in all men, as Trench has observed, a sense of the significance of names,—a feeling that they ought to be, and in a world of absolute truth would be, the utterance of the innermost character or qualities of the persons that bear them; and hence nothing is more telling in a personal controversy than the exposure of a striking incongruity between a name and the person who

owns it. We have been told that the late President Lincoln, on being introduced to a very stout person by the name of Small, remarked, "Small, Small! Well, what strange names they do give men, to be sure! Why, they've got a fellow down in Virginia whom they call *Wise!*" In the same spirit, Jerome, one of the Fathers of the Church, being engaged in controversy with one Vigilantius, *i. e.*, "the Watchful," about certain vigils which the latter opposed, stigmatized him as "Dormitantius," or "the Sleeper." But more frequently the nickname is suggested by the real name where there is no such antagonism between them,—where the latter, as it is, or by a slight change, can be made to contain a confession of the ignorance or folly of the bearer. Thus, Tiberius Claudius Nero, in allusion to his drunkenness, was called "Biberius Caldius Mero"; and the Arians were nicknamed "Ariomanites." What can be happier in this way than the "Brand of Hell," applied to Pope Hildebrand; the title of "Slanders," affixed by Fuller to Sanders, the foul-mouthed libeller of Queen Elizabeth; the "Vanity" and "Sterility," which Baxter coined from the names of Vane and Sterry; and the term "Sweepnet," which that skilful master of the passions, Cicero, gave to the infamous Praetor of Sicily, whose name, Verres, *(verro,)* was prophetic of his *sweeping* the province,—declaring that others might be partial to the *jus verrinum* (which might mean verrine law or boar sauce), but not he?

There is probably no country, unless it be our own, in which nicknames have flourished more than in England. Every party there has had its watchwords with which to rally its members, or to set on its own bandogs to worry and tear those of another faction; and what is quite extra-

ordinary is, that many of the names of political parties and religious sects were originally nicknames given in the bitterest scorn and party hate, yet ultimately accepted by the party themselves. Thus "Tory" originally meant an Irish freebooting bog-trotter,—an outlaw who favored the cause of James II.; and "Whig" is derived from the Scotch name for sour milk, which was supposed aptly to characterize the disposition of the Republicans. "Methodists" was a name given in 1729, first to John and Charles Wesley at Oxford, on account of their close observance of system and method in their studies and worship, and afterwards to their followers. So in other countries: the highest name which any man can bear, "Christian," was originally a nickname, or little better, given by the idle and witty inhabitants of Antioch. The Antiochenes were famous in all antiquity for their nicknames, for inventing which they had a positive genius. The "Lutherans" received their name, in which they now glory, from their antagonists. "Capuchin" was a jesting name given by the boys in the streets to certain Franciscan monks, on account of the peaked and pointed hood (capuccio) which they wore. The Dominicans gloried all the more in their name when it was resolved by their enemies into "Domini canes"; they were proud to acknowledge that they were, indeed, "the Lord's watchdogs," who barked at the slightest appearance of heresy, and strove to drive it away.

The Dutch people long prided themselves on the humiliating nickname of "*Les Gueulx*," "the Beggars," which was given in 1566 to the revolters against the rule of Philip II. Margaret of Parma, then governor of the Netherlands, being somewhat disconcerted at the numbers of that party, when they presented a petition to her, was

reassured by her minister, who remarked to her that there was nothing to be feared from a crowd of beggars. "Great was the indignation of all," says Motley, "that the State councillor (the Seigneur de Berlaymont) should have dared to stigmatize as beggars a band of gentlemen with the best blood of the land in their veins. Brederode, on the contrary, smoothing their anger, assured them with good humor that nothing could be more fortunate. 'They call us *beggars!*' said he; 'let us accept the name. We will contend with the Inquisition, but remain loyal to the king, till compelled to wear the beggar's sack.' . . 'Long live the beggars!' he cried, as he wiped his beard and set the bowl down: '*Vivent les gueulx!*' Then, for the first time, from the lips of those reckless nobles rose the famous cry, which was so often to ring over land and sea, amid blazing cities, on blood-stained decks, through the smoke and carnage of many a stricken field. The humor of Brederode was hailed with deafening shouts of applause. The shibboleth was invented. The conjuration which they had been anxiously seeking was found. Their enemies had provided them with a spell, which was to prove, in after days, potent enough to start a spirit from palace or hovel, as the deeds of the 'wild beggars,' the 'wood beggars,' and the 'beggars of the sea,' taught Philip at last to understand the nation which he had driven to madness."

In like manner the French Protestants accepted and gloried in the scornful nickname of the "Huguenots," as did the two fierce Italian factions in those of "Guelphs" and "Ghibbellines." Even the title of the British "Premier," or "Prime Minister," now one of the highest dignity, was at first a nickname, given in pure mockery,—the statesman to whom it was applied being Sir Robert Wal-

pole, as will be seen by the following words spoken by him in the House of Commons in 1742: "Having invested me with a kind of mock dignity, and styled me a *Prime Minister*, they (the opposition) impute to me an unpardonable abuse of the chimerical authority which *they* only created and conferred." It is remarkable that the nickname Cæsar has given the title to the heads of two great nations, Germany and Russia *(kaiser, czar)*.

It is a fortunate thing when men who have been branded with names intended to make them hateful or ridiculous, can thus turn the tables on their *dénigreurs*, by accepting and glorying in their new titles. It was this which Lord Halifax did when he was called "a trimmer." Instead of quarrelling with the nickname, he exulted in it as a title of honor. Everything good, he said, trims between extremes. The temperate zone trims between the climate in which men are roasted, and the climate in which men are frozen. The English Church trims between the Anabaptist madness and the Papist lethargy. The English constitution trims between Turkish despotism and Polish anarchy. Virtue is nothing but a just temper between propensities, any one of which, indulged to excess, becomes vice. Nay, the perfection of the Supreme Being himself consists in the exact equilibrium of attributes, none of which could preponderate without disturbing the whole moral and physical order of the world.*

The nicknames "Quaker," "Puritan," "Roundhead," unlike those we have just named, were never accepted by those to whom they were given. "Puritan" was first heard in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and was given to a party of purists who would have reformed the Reforma-

* Macaulay's "History of England," Vol. I.

tion. They were also ridiculed, from their fastidiousness about trivial matters, as "Precisians"; Drayton characterizes them as persons that for a painted glass window would pull down the whole church. The distinction between "Roundhead" and "Cavalier" first appeared during the civil war between Charles I. and his Parliament. A foe to all outward ornament, the "Roundhead" wore his hair cropped close, while the "Cavalier" was contradistinguished by his chivalrous tone, his romantic spirit, and his flowing locks.

All readers of history are familiar with "The Rump,"—the contemptuous nickname given to the Long Parliament at the close of its career. The "Rump," Mr. Disraeli remarks, became a perpetual whetstone for the loyal wits, till at length its former admirers, the rabble themselves, in town and country, vied with each other in "burning rumps" of beef, which were hung by chains on a gallows with a bonfire underneath, and proved how the people, like children, come at length to make a plaything of that which was once their bugbear.

Ben Jonson, the sturdy old dramatist, was nicknamed "The Limestone and Mortar Poet," in allusion to his having begun life as a bricklayer. A member of the British Parliament in the reign of George III. is known as "Single-speech Hamilton," and is referred to by that designation as invariably as if it were his baptismal name. He made one, and but one, good speech during his parliamentary career. "Boot-jack Robinson" was the derisive title given to a mediocre politician, who, during a crisis in the ministry of the Duke of Newcastle, was made Home Secretary and ministerial leader of the House of Commons. "Sir Thomas Robinson lead us!" indignantly exclaimed Pitt to Fox;

"the duke might as well send his boot-jack to lead us!" It is said that Mr. Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville, got his nickname from a new word which he introduced in a speech in the House of Commons, in 1775, on the American War. He was the first to use the word "starvation" (a hybrid formation, in which a Saxon root was united with a Latin ending), and was ever afterwards called by his acquaintances, "Starvation Dundas." "Chicken Taylor" was the name which, in the early part of the century, long stuck to Mr. M. A. Taylor; he contended against a great lawyer in the House, and then apologized that "he, a chicken in the law, should venture on a fight with the cock of Westminster." "Adullamites," the name given by Mr. Bright to Mr. Lowe and some of his Liberal friends, — a name derived from the Scripture story of David and his followers retiring to a cave,— will probably long continue to be applied to the members of a discontented faction.

Everybody has heard of "Ditto to Mr. Burke"; the victim of this title was a Mr. Conger, who was elected with Burke to represent the city of Bristol. Utterly bewildered how to thank the electors, after his associate's splendid speech, he condensed his own address into these significant words: "Gentlemen, I say ditto to Mr. Burke, ditto to Mr. Burke!" Among the other memorable English nicknames, that of "Jemmy Twitcher," taken from the chief of Macheath's gang in "The Beggar's Opera," and applied to Lord Sandwich,— that of "Orange Peel," given to Sir Robert Peel by the Irish, the inveterate foes of the House of Orange,— "the stormy Petrel of debate," given to Mr. Bernal Osborne,— "Finality Russell," fastened upon Lord John Russell because he wished a certain Reform measure to

be final,—and the unique "Dizzy," into which his enemies have condensed the name of the celebrated Jewish premier,—are preëminently significant and telling. Among the hundreds of American political nicknames, there are many which are not remarkably expressive; others, like "Old Bullion" and "Old Hickory," are steeped in "the very brine of conceit," and sum up a character as if by inspiration.

It is a curious fact that some of the most damaging nicknames have been terms or epithets which were originally complimentary, but which, used sarcastically, have been associated with more ridicule or odium than the most opprobrious epithets. Men hate to be continually reminded of any one virtue of a fellow-man,—to hear the changes rung continually upon some one great action or daring feat he has performed. It seems, indeed, as if a man whose name is continually dinned in our ears, coupled with some complimentary epithet, some allusion to a praiseworthy deed which he once did, or some excellent trait of character,—must be distinguished for nothing else. Unless this is his only virtue, why all this fuss and pother about it? The Athenians banished Aristides, because they were tired of hearing him called "the Just."

Some parents have so great a dread of nicknames that they tax their ingenuity to invent for their children a Christian name that may defy nicking or abbreviation. With Southey's Doctor Dove, they think "it is not a good thing to be Tom'd or Bob'd, Jack'd or Jim'd, Sam'd or Ben'd, Natty'd or Batty'd, Neddy'd or Teddy'd, Will'd or Bill'd, Dick'd or Nick'd, Joe'd or Jerry'd, as you go through the world." The good doctor, however, had no such antipathy to the shortening of female names. "He

never called any woman Mary, though *Mare*, he said, being the sea, was in many respects too emblematic of the sex. It was better to use a synonyme of better omen, and Molly was therefore preferred as being soft. If he accosted a vixen of that name in her worst temper, he *Mollyfied* her! On the contrary, he never could be induced to substitute Sally for Sarah. Sally, he said, had a salacious sound, and, moreover, it reminded him of rovers, which women ought not to be. Martha he called Patty, because it came pat to the tongue. Dorothy remained Dorothy, because it was neither fitting that women should be made Dolls, nor I-dols! Susan with him was always *Sue*, because women were to be *Sue*-d, and Winnifred, *Win*-ny, because they were to be won."*

The annoyance which may be given to a man, even by an apparently meaningless nickname, which sticks to him wherever he goes, is well illustrated by a story told by Hazlitt in his "Conversations with Northcote," the painter. A village baker got, he knew not how, the name of "Tiddy-doll." He was teased and worried by it till it almost drove him crazy. The boys hallooed it after him in the streets, and poked their faces into his shop-windows; the parrots echoed the name as he passed their cages; and even the soldiers took it up (for the place was a military station), and marched to parade, beating time with their feet and singing *Tiddy-doll*, *Tiddy-doll*, as they passed by his door. He flew out upon them at the sound with inextinguishable fury, was knocked down and rolled into the kennel, and got up in an agony of rage, his white clothes drabbled and bespattered with mud. A respectable and friendly gentleman in the neighborhood, who pitied his weakness, called

* "The Doctor," Vol. VII.

him into his house one day, and remonstrated with him on the subject. He advised him to take no notice of his persecutors. "What," said he, "does it signify? Suppose they *do* call you *Tiddy-doll?* What harm?" "*There,—there it is again!*" burst forth the infuriated baker; "you've called me so *yourself.* You called me in on purpose to insult me!" And, saying this, he vented his rage in a torrent of abusive epithets, and darted out of the house in a tempest of passion.

The readers of Boswell will remember, in connection with this subject, an amusing anecdote told of Dr. Johnson. Being rudely jostled and profanely addressed by a stout fish-woman, as he was passing through Billingsgate, he looked straight at her, and said deliberately, "You are a triangle!" which made her swear louder than before. He then called her "a rectangle! a parallelogram!" but she was more voluble still. At last he screamed out, "You are a miserable, wicked *hypothenuse!*" and she was struck dumb. Curran had a similar ludicrous encounter with a fish-woman at Cork. Taking up the gauntlet, when assailed by her on the quay, he speedily found that he was overmatched, and that he had nothing to do but to beat a retreat. "This, however, was to be done with dignity; so, drawing myself up disdainfully, I said 'Madam, I scorn all further discourse with such an *individual!*' She did not understand the word, and thought it, no doubt, the very hyperbole of opprobrium. 'Individual, you wagabone!' she screamed, 'what do you mean by that? I'm no more an individual than your mother was!' Never was victory more complete. The whole sisterhood did homage to me, and I left the quay of Cork covered with glory."

CHAPTER XIII.

CURIOSITIES OF LANGUAGE.

Language is the depository of the accumulated body of experience, to which all former ages have contributed their part, and which is the inheritance of all yet to come.—J. S. MILL.

Often in words contemplated singly there are boundless stores of moral and historic truth, and no less of passion and imagination, laid up.—TRENCH.

A THOUGHTFUL English writer tells us that, when about nine years old, he learned with much surprise that the word "sincere" was derived from the practice of filling up flaws in furniture with wax, whence *sine cera* came to mean pure, not vamped up or adulterated. This explanation gave him great pleasure, and abode in his memory as having first shown him that there is a reason in words as well as things. There are few cultivated persons who have not felt, at some time in their lives, a thrill of surprise and delight like that of this writer. Throughout our whole lives, from the cradle to the grave, the stream of our history, inner and outer, runs wonderfully blended with the texture of the words we use. Dive into what subject we will, we never touch the bottom. The simplest prattle of a child is but the light surface of a deep sea containing many treasures. It would be hard, therefore, to find in the whole range of inquiry another study which at once is so fascinating, and so richly repays the labor, as that of the etymology or primitive significations of words.

It is an epoch in one's intellectual history when he first learns that words are living and not dead things,—that in

these children of the mind are incarnated the wit and wisdom, the poetic fancies and the deep intuitions, the passionate longings and the happy or sad experiences of many generations. The discovery is "like the dropping of scales from his eyes, like the acquiring of another sense, or the introduction into a new world"; he never ceases wondering at the moral marvels that everywhere reveal themselves to his gaze. To eyes thus opened, dictionaries, instead of seeming huge masses of word-lumber, become vast storehouses of historical memorials, than which none are more vital in spirit or more pregnant with meaning. It is not in oriental fairy-tales only that persons drop pearls every time they open their mouths,—like Molière's Bourgeois Gentilhomme, who had been speaking prose all his life without knowing it, we are dropping gems from our lips in almost every hour of the day. Not a thought or feeling or wish can we utter without recalling, by an unconscious sign or symbol, some historic fact, some memory of "auld lang syne," some bygone custom, some vanished superstition, some exploded prejudice, or some ethical divination that has lost its charm. Even the homeliest and most familiar words, the most hackneyed phrases, are connected by imperceptible ties with the hopes and fears, the reasonings and reflections, of bygone men and times.

Every generation of men inherits and uses all the scientific wealth of the past. "It is not merely the great and rich in the intellectual world who are thus blessed, but the humblest inquirer, while he puts his reasonings into words, benefits by the labors of the greatest. When he counts his little wealth, he finds he has in his hands coins which bear the image and superscription of ancient and modern intellectual dynasties, and that in virtue of this

possession acquisitions are in his power, solid knowledge within his reach, which none could ever have attained to, if it were not that the gold of truth once dug out of the mine circulates more and more widely among mankind." Emerson beautifully calls language "fossil poetry." The etymologist, he adds, finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. "As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long since ceased to remind us of their poetic origin."

Not only is this true, but many a single word, as Archbishop Trench remarks, is itself a concentrated poem, in which are treasured stores of poetical thought and imagery. Examine it closely, and it will be found to rest upon some palpable or subtle analogy of things material and spiritual, showing that, however trite the image now, the man who first coined the word was a poet. The older the word, the profounder and more beautiful the meanings it will often be found to enclose; for words of late growth speak to the head, not to the heart; thoughts and feelings are too subtle for new words. It is the use of words when new and fresh from the lips of their inventors, before their vivid and picturesque meanings have faded out or been obscured by their many secondary significations, that gives such pictorial beauty, pith, and raciness, to the early writers; "and hence to recall language, to restore its early meanings, to re-mint it in novel forms, is the secret of all effective writing and speaking,—of all verbal expression which is to leave, as was said of the eloquence of Pericles, stings in the minds and memories of the hearers."

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How pregnant with instruction is often the history of a single word! Coleridge, who keenly appreciated the significance of words, says that there are cases where more knowledge of more value may be conveyed by the history of a word than by the history of a campaign. Sometimes the germ of a nation's life,—the philosophy of some polit-

* "The Origin of Language," by F. W. Farrar.

ical, moral, or intellectual movement in a country,—will be found coiled up in a single word, just as the oak is found in an acorn. The fact that the Arabs were the arithmeticians, the astronomers, the chemists, and the merchants of the Middle Ages, is shown by the words we have borrowed from them,—algebra, almanac, cypher, zero, zenith, alkali, alcohol, alchemy, alembic, magazine, tariff, cotton, elixir; and so that the monastic system originated in the Greek, and not in the Latin church, is shown by the fact that the words expressing the chief elements of the system, as monk, monastery, anchorite, cenobite, ascetic, hermit, are Greek, not Latin. What an amount of history is wrapped up in the word *Pagan!* The term, we learn from Gibbon, is remotely derived from *Πάγη*, in the Doric dialect, signifying a fountain; and the rural neighborhood which frequented the same derived the common appellation of *Pagus* and Pagans. Soon *Pagan* and rural became nearly synonymous, and the meaner peasants acquired that name which has been corrupted into *peasant* in the modern languages of Europe. All non-military people soon came to be branded as Pagans. The Christians were the soldiers of Christ; their adversaries, who refused the *sacrament*, or military oath of baptism, might deserve the metaphorical name of Pagans. Christianity gradually filled the cities of the empire; the old religion retired and languished, in the time of Prudentius, in obscure villages. From *Pagus*, as a root, comes *pagius*, first a villager, then a rural laborer, then a servant, lastly a *page*. *Pagina*, first the enclosed square of cultivated land near a village, graduated into the page of a book. *Pagare*, from denoting the *field-service* that compensated the provider of food and raiment, was applied eventually to every form in which the changes of

society required the benefited to *pay* for what they received.

Often where history is utterly dumb concerning the past, language speaks. The discovery of the foot-print on the sand did not more certainly prove to Robinson Crusoe that the island of which he had fancied himself the sole inhabitant contained a brother man, than the similarity of the inflections in the speech of different peoples proves their brotherhood. Were all the histories of England swept from existence, the study of its language,—developing the fact that the basis of the language is Saxon, that the names of the prominent objects of nature are Celtic, the terms of war and government Norman-French, the ecclesiastical terms Latin,—would enable us to reconstruct a large part of the story of the past, as it even now enables us to verify many of the statements of the chroniclers. Humboldt, in his "Cosmos," eulogizes the study of words as one of the richest sources of historical knowledge; and it is probable that what comparative philology, yet in its infancy, has already discovered, will compel a rewriting of the history of the world. Even now it has thrown light on many of the most perplexing problems of religion, history, and ethnography; and it seems destined to triumphs of which we can but dimly apprehend the consequences. On the stone tablets of the universe God's own finger has written the changes which millions of years have wrought on the mountain and the plain; and in the fluid air, which he coins into spoken words, man has preserved forever the grand facts of his past history and the grand processes of his inmost soul. "Nations and *languages* against dynasties and treaties," is the cry which is remodelling the map of Europe; and in our country, comparative philologists,—to

their shame be it said,—have labored with satanic zeal to prove the impossibility of a common origin of languages and races, in order to justify, by scientific arguments, the theory of slavery. It has been said that the interpretation of one word in the Vedas fifty years earlier would have saved many Hindoo widows from being burned alive; and the philologists of England and Germany yet expect to prove to the Brahmins that *caste* is not a religious institution, and has no authority in their sacred writings,—the effect of which will be to enable the British government to inflict penalties for the observance of the rules of *caste*, without violating its promise to respect the religion of the natives, and thus to relieve India from the greatest incubus and clog on its progress.

CHANGES IN THE MEANING OF WORDS.

Language, as it daguerreotypes human thought, shares, as we have seen, in all the vicissitudes of man. It mirrors all the changes in the character, tastes, customs, and opinions of a people, and shows with unerring faithfulness whether and in what degree they advance or recede in culture or morality. As new ideas germinate in the mind of a nation, it will demand new forms of expression; on the other hand, a petrified and mechanical national mind will as surely betray itself in a petrified and mechanical language. It is by no accident or caprice that

> "—— words, whilom flourishing,
> Pass now no more, but banished from the court,
> Dwell with disgrace among the vulgar sort;
> And those, which eld's strict doom did disallow
> And damn for bullion, go for current now."

Often with the lapse of time the meaning of a word changes imperceptibly, until after some centuries it be-

comes the very opposite of what it once was. To disinter these old meanings out of the alluvium and drift of ages, affords as much pleasure to the linguist as to disinter a fossil does to the geologist.

An exact knowledge of the changes of signification which words have undergone is not merely a source of pleasure; it is absolutely indispensable to the full understanding of old authors. Thus, for example, Milton and Thomson use "horrent" and "horrid" for bristling, *e. g.*,

"With dangling ice all *horrid*."

Milton speaks of a "savage" (meaning woody, *silva*) hill, and of "amiable" (meaning lovely) fruit. Again, in the well-known lines of the "Allegro," where, Milton says, amongst the cheerful sights of rural morn,

"And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the vale,"—

the words "telling his tale" do not mean that he is romancing or making love to the milkmaid, but that he is *counting his sheep* as they pass the hawthorn,—a natural and familiar occupation of shepherds on a summer's morning. The primary meaning of "tale" is to count or number, as in the German "zahlen." It is thus used in the Book of Exodus, which states that the Israelites were compelled to deliver their *tale of bricks*. In the English *tale* and in the French *conte* the secondary meaning has supplanted the first, though we still speak of "keeping tally," of "untold gold," and say, "Here is the sum twice-told."

It has been said that one of the arts of a great poet or prose-writer, who wishes to add emphasis to his style, —to bring out all the latent forces of his native tongue,— will often consist in reconnecting a word with its original

derivation, in not suffering it to forget itself and its father's house, though it would. This Milton does with signal effect, and so frequently that we must often interpret his words rather by their classical meanings than by their English use. Thus in "Paradise Lost," when Satan speaks of his having been pursued by "Heaven's *afflicting* thunder," the poet uses the word "afflicting" in its original primary sense of striking down bodily. Properly the word denotes a state of mind or feeling only, and is not used to-day in a concrete sense. So when Milton, at the opening of the same poem, speaks of

"the *secret* top
Of Oreb or of Sinai,"

the meaning of the word "secret" is not that of the English adjective, but is remote, apart, lonely, as in Virgil's "secretosque pios." The absurdity of supposing the word to be the same as our ordinary adjective led Bentley, among many ridiculous "improvements" of Milton's language, to change it to "sacred."

Shakspeare, also, not unfrequently uses words in their classical sense. Thus when Cleopatra speaks of

"Such gifts as we greet *modern* friends withal,"

"modern" is used in the sense of *modal*, (from *modus*, a fashion or manner;) a modern friend, compared with a true friend, being what the fashion of a thing is, compared with the substance. So,—as De Quincey, to whom we owe this explanation, has shown,—when in the famous picture of life, "All the World's a Stage," the justice is described as

"Full of wise saws and modern instances,"

the meaning is not, "full of wise sayings and modern illustrations," but full of proverbial maxims of conduct

and of trivial arguments; *i. e.*, of petty distinctions that never touch the point at issue. *Instances* is from *instantia*, which the monkish and scholastic writers always used in the sense of an argument.

Mystery is derived from "mu," the imitation of closing the lips. *Courage* is "good heart." *Anecdote*,—from the Greek ἀν (not), ἐκ (out), and δότα (given),—meant once a fact not given out or published; now it means a short, amusing story. Procopius, a Greek historian in the reign of Justinian, is said to have coined the word. Not daring, for fear of torture and death, to speak of some living persons as they deserved, he wrote a work which he called "Anecdotes," or a "Secret History." The instant an anecdote is published, it belies its title; it is no longer an anecdote. *Allowance* formerly was used to denote praise or approval; as when Shakspeare says, in "Troilus and Cressida,"

> "A stirring dwarf we do *allowance* give
> Before a sleeping giant."

To prevent, which now means to hinder or obstruct, signified, in its Latin etymology, to anticipate, to get the start of, and is thus used in the Old Testament. *Girl* once designated a young person of either sex. *Widow* was applied to men as well as women. *Astonished* literally means thunderstruck, as its derivation from "attonare" shows. Holland, in his translation of Livy, speaks of a knave who threw some heavy stones upon a certain king, "whereof the one smote the king upon his head, the other astonished his shoulder." *Sagacious* once meant quick-smelling, as in the line

> "The hound sagacious of the tainted prey."

Rascal, according to Verstegan, primarily meant an "ill-favoured, lean, and worthelesse deer." Thus Shakspeare:

"Horns! the noblest deer hath them as huge as the rascal."

Afterwards it denoted the common people, the *plebs* as distinguished from the *populus*. A *naturalist* was once a person who rejected revealed truth, and believed only in natural religion. He is now an investigator of nature and her laws, and often a believer in Christianity. *Blackguards* were formerly the scullions, turnspits, and other meaner retainers in a great household, who, when a change was made from one residence to another, accompanied and took care of the pots, pans, and other kitchen utensils, by which they were smutted. Webster, in his play of "The White Devil," speaks of "a lousy knave, that within these twenty years rode with the *black guard* in the Duke's carriage, amongst spits and dripping-pans." *Artillery*, which to-day means the heavy ordnance of modern warfare, was two or three centuries ago applied to any engines for throwing missiles, even to the bow and arrow. *Punctual*, which now denotes exactness in keeping engagements, formerly applied to space as well as to time. Sir Thomas Browne speaks of "a *punctual* truth"; and we read in other writers of "a *punctual* relation" or "description," meaning a particular or circumstantial relation or description.

Bombast, now swelling talk, inflated diction without substance, was originally cotton padding. It is derived from the Low Latin, *bombax*, cotton. *Chemist* once meant the same as alchemist. *Polite* originally meant polished. Cudworth speaks of "polite bodies, as looking-glasses." *Tidy*, which now means neat, well-arranged, is derived from the old English word "tide," meaning time, as in

eventide. Tidy (German, *zeitig*,) is timely, seasonable. As things in right time are apt to be in the right place, the transition in the meaning of the word is a natural one. *Caitiff* formerly meant captive, being derived from *captivus* through the Norman-French. The change of signification points to the tendency of slavery utterly to debase the character,—to transform the man into a cowardly miscreant. In like manner *miscreant*, once simply a misbeliever, and applied to the most virtuous as well as to the vilest, points to the deep-felt conviction that a wrong belief leads to wrong living. Thus Gibbon: "The emperor's generosity to the *miscreant* (Soliman) was interpreted as treason to the Christian cause." *Thought*, in early English, was anxious care; *e. g.*, "Take no *thought* for your life" (Matt. vi. 25). *Thing* primarily meant discourse, then solemn discussion, council, court of justice, cause, matter or subject of discourse. The *husting* was originally the house-thing, or domestic court.

Coquets were once male as well as female. *Usury*, which now means taking illegal or excessive interest, denoted, at first, the taking of any interest, however small. A *tobacconist* was formerly a smoker, not a seller, of tobacco. *Corpse*, now a body from which the breath of life has departed, once denoted the body of the living also; as in Surrey,

"A valiant *corpse*, where force and beauty met."

Incomprehensible has undergone a striking change of meaning within the last three centuries. In the Athanasian creed the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are spoken of as *immense*. In translating the creed from the Latin, in which it was first penned, the word *immensus* was rendered "incomprehensible," a word which, at that time, was not

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ical, moral, or intellectual movement in a country,—will be found coiled up in a single word, just as the oak is found in an acorn. The fact that the Arabs were the arithmeticians, the astronomers, the chemists, and the merchants of the Middle Ages, is shown by the words we have borrowed from them,—algebra, almanac, cypher, zero, zenith, alkali, alcohol, alchemy, alembic, magazine, tariff, cotton, elixir; and so that the monastic system originated in the Greek, and not in the Latin church, is shown by the fact that the words expressing the chief elements of the system, as monk, monastery, anchorite, cenobite, ascetic, hermit, are Greek, not Latin. What an amount of history is wrapped up in the word *Pagan!* The term, we learn from Gibbon, is remotely derived from *Πάγη*, in the Doric dialect, signifying a fountain; and the rural neighborhood which frequented the same derived the common appellation of *Pagus* and Pagans. Soon *Pagan* and rural became nearly synonymous, and the meaner peasants acquired that name which has been corrupted into *peasant* in the modern languages of Europe. All non-military people soon came to be branded as Pagans. The Christians were the soldiers of Christ; their adversaries, who refused the *sacrament*, or military oath of baptism, might deserve the metaphorical name of Pagans. Christianity gradually filled the cities of the empire; the old religion retired and languished, in the time of Prudentius, in obscure villages. From *Pagus*, as a root, comes *pagius*, first a villager, then a rural laborer, then a servant, lastly a *page*. *Pagina*, first the enclosed square of cultivated land near a village, graduated into the page of a book. *Pagare*, from denoting the *field-service* that compensated the provider of food and raiment, was applied eventually to every form in which the changes of

society required the benefited to *pay* for what they received.

Often where history is utterly dumb concerning the past, language speaks. The discovery of the foot-print on the sand did not more certainly prove to Robinson Crusoe that the island of which he had fancied himself the sole inhabitant contained a brother man, than the similarity of the inflections in the speech of different peoples proves their brotherhood. Were all the histories of England swept from existence, the study of its language,—developing the fact that the basis of the language is Saxon, that the names of the prominent objects of nature are Celtic, the terms of war and government Norman-French, the ecclesiastical terms Latin,—would enable us to reconstruct a large part of the story of the past, as it even now enables us to verify many of the statements of the chroniclers. Humboldt, in his "Cosmos," eulogizes the study of words as one of the richest sources of historical knowledge; and it is probable that what comparative philology, yet in its infancy, has already discovered, will compel a rewriting of the history of the world. Even now it has thrown light on many of the most perplexing problems of religion, history, and ethnography; and it seems destined to triumphs of which we can but dimly apprehend the consequences. On the stone tablets of the universe God's own finger has written the changes which millions of years have wrought on the mountain and the plain; and in the fluid air, which he coins into spoken words, man has preserved forever the grand facts of his past history and the grand processes of his inmost soul. "Nations and *languages* against dynasties and treaties," is the cry which is remodelling the map of Europe; and in our country, comparative philologists,—to

their shame be it said,—have labored with satanic zeal to prove the impossibility of a common origin of languages and races, in order to justify, by scientific arguments, the theory of slavery. It has been said that the interpretation of one word in the Vedas fifty years earlier would have saved many Hindoo widows from being burned alive; and the philologists of England and Germany yet expect to prove to the Brahmins that *caste* is not a religious institution, and has no authority in their sacred writings,—the effect of which will be to enable the British government to inflict penalties for the observance of the rules of *caste*, without violating its promise to respect the religion of the natives, and thus to relieve India from the greatest incubus and clog on its progress.

CHANGES IN THE MEANING OF WORDS.

Language, as it daguerreotypes human thought, shares, as we have seen, in all the vicissitudes of man. It mirrors all the changes in the character, tastes, customs, and opinions of a people, and shows with unerring faithfulness whether and in what degree they advance or recede in culture or morality. As new ideas germinate in the mind of a nation, it will demand new forms of expression; on the other hand, a petrified and mechanical national mind will as surely betray itself in a petrified and mechanical language. It is by no accident or caprice that

> "——— words, whilom flourishing,
> Pass now no more, but banished from the court,
> Dwell with disgrace among the vulgar sort;
> And those, which eld's strict doom did disallow
> And damn for bullion, go for current now."

Often with the lapse of time the meaning of a word changes imperceptibly, until after some centuries it be-

comes the very opposite of what it once was. To disinter these old meanings out of the alluvium and drift of ages, affords as much pleasure to the linguist as to disinter a fossil does to the geologist.

An exact knowledge of the changes of signification which words have undergone is not merely a source of pleasure; it is absolutely indispensable to the full understanding of old authors. Thus, for example, Milton and Thomson use "horrent" and "horrid" for bristling, *e. g.*,

"With dangling ice all *horrid*."

Milton speaks of a "savage" (meaning woody, *silva*) hill, and of "amiable" (meaning lovely) fruit. Again, in the well-known lines of the "Allegro," where, Milton says, amongst the cheerful sights of rural morn,

"And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the vale,"—

the words "telling his tale" do not mean that he is romancing or making love to the milkmaid, but that he is *counting his sheep* as they pass the hawthorn,—a natural and familiar occupation of shepherds on a summer's morning. The primary meaning of "tale" is to count or number, as in the German "zahlen." It is thus used in the Book of Exodus, which states that the Israelites were compelled to deliver their *tale of bricks*. In the English *tale* and in the French *conte* the secondary meaning has supplanted the first, though we still speak of "keeping tally," of "untold gold," and say, "Here is the sum twice-told."

It has been said that one of the arts of a great poet or prose-writer, who wishes to add emphasis to his style, —to bring out all the latent forces of his native tongue,— will often consist in reconnecting a word with its original

called Duns; while his opponents would contemptuously rejoin, "Oh, you are a *Duns-man*," or more briefly, "You are a *Duns*." As the new learning was enlisting more and more of the scholarship of the age on its side, the title became more and more a term of scorn; and thus, from that long extinct conflict between the old and the new learning, the mediæval and the modern theology, we inherit the words "dunce" and "duncery." The lot of poor Duns, as the Archbishop observes, was certainly a hard one. That the name of "the Subtle Doctor," as he was called, one of the keenest and most subtle-witted of men,—according to Hooker, "the wittiest of the school divines,"—should become a synonyme for stupidity and obstinate dulness, was a fate of which even his bitterest enemies could never have dreamed.

COMMON WORDS WITH CURIOUS DERIVATIONS.

Saunterers were once pilgrims to the Holy Land *(la Sainte Terre)*, who, it was found, took their own time to go there. *Bit* is that which has been bit off, and exactly corresponds to the word "morsel," used in the same sense, and derived from the Latin, *mordere*, to bite. *Bankrupt* means literally broken bench. It was the custom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries for the Lombard merchants to expose their wares for sale in the market-place on benches. When one of their number failed, all the other merchants set upon him, drove him from the market, and *broke* his *bench* to pieces. *Banco rotto*, the Italian for bench-broken, becomes *banqueroute* in French, and in English *bankrupt*. *Alligator* is from the Spanish, *el lagarto*, "the lizard," being the largest of the lizard species. *Stipulation* is from *stipulum*, a straw, which the Romans broke

when they made a mutual engagement. *Dexterity* is simply right-handedness. *Mountebank* means a quack-medicine vendor,—from the Italian, *montare*, to mount, and *banco*, a bench. Literally, one who mounts a bench to boast of his infallible skill in curing diseases. *Quandary* is a corruption of the French, *qu'en dirai (je)?* "what shall I say of it?" and expresses that feeling of uncertainty which would naturally prompt such a question. *Faint* is from the French, *se feindre*, to pretend; so that originally fainting was a pretended weakness or inability. We have an example of the thing originally indicated by the word, in the French theatres, where professional fainters are employed, whose business it is to be overcome and to sink to the floor under the powerful acting of the tragedians.

Topsy-turvy is said to be a contraction or corruption of "top-side t'other way," just as helter-skelter is from *hilariter et celeriter*, "gaily and quickly." *Hip! hip! hurrah!* is said to have been originally a war-cry adopted by the stormers of a German town, wherein a great many Jews had taken refuge. The place being sacked, the Jews were all put to the sword, amid the shouts of "*Hiersolyma est perdita.*" From the first letters of these words (h. e. p.) an exclamation was contrived. When the wine sparkles in the cup, and patriotic or other soul-thrilling sentiments are greeted with a "Hip! hip! hurrah!" it is well enough to remember the origin of a cry which reminds us of the cruelty of Christians towards God's chosen people. *Sexton* is a corruption of "sacristan," which is from *sacra*, the sacred things of a church. The sacristan's office was to take care of the vessels of the service and the vestments of the clergy. Since the Reformation, his duties in this respect have been greatly lessened, and he has dug the graves,—

so that the term now commonly means grave-digger, though it still retains somewhat of its old meaning.

Toad-eater is a metaphor supposed to be taken from a mountebank's boy eating toads, in order to show his master's skill in expelling poison. It is more probable, however, that the phrase is a version of the French, ***araler des couleuvres***, which means putting up with all sorts of indignities without showing resentment. The propriety of the term rests on the fact that dependent persons are often forced to do the most nauseous things to please their patrons. The same trick of pretending to eat reptiles, such as toads, is held by some etymologists to be the origin of the terms *buffoon*, *buffoonery*, from the Latin, ***bufo***, a toad. Wedgwood derives it from the French, ***bouffon***, a jester, from the Italian, *buffa*, a puff, a blast or a blurt with the mouth made at one in scorn. A puff with the mouth indicates contempt; it is emblematically ***making light*** of an object. In "David Copperfield" we read: "And who minds Dick? Dick's nobody! Whoo! He blew a slight, contemptuous breath, as if he blew himself away."

Cant (Gaelic, *cainnt*, speech,) is properly the language spoken by thieves and beggars among themselves, when they do not wish to be understood by bystanders. Subsequently, it came to mean the peculiar terms used by any other profession or community. Some etymologists derive the word from the Latin, *cantare*, to sing, and suppose it to signify the whining cry of professional beggars, though it may have obtained its beggar sense from some instinctive notion of its quasi-religious one. It has been noted that the whole class of words comprising ***enchant, incantation***, etc., were primarily referable to religious ceremonies

of some kind; and as once an important part of a beggar's daily labor was invoking, or seeming to invoke, blessings on those who gave him alms, this, with the natural tendency to utter any oft-repeated phrases in a sing-song, rhythmical tone, gave to the word *cant* its present signification. In Scotland the word has a peculiar meaning. About the middle of the seventeenth century, Andrew and Alexander Cant, of Edinburgh, maintained that all refusers of the covenant ought to be excommunicated, and that all excommunicated might lawfully be killed; and in their grace after meat they "praid for those phanaticques and seditious ministers" who had been arrested and imprisoned, that the Lord would pity and deliver them. From these two Cants, Andrew and Alexander, it is said, all seditious praying and preaching in Scotland is called "Canting."

The tendency to regard money as the source of true happiness is strikingly illustrated in the word *wealth*, which is connected with *weal*, just as in Latin *beatus* meant both blessed and rich, and ὄλβιος the same in Greek. *Property* and *propriety* come from the same French word *propriété*; so that the Frenchman in New York was not far out of the way, when in the panic of 1857 he said he "should lose all his *propriety*." The term *blue-stocking*, applied to literary ladies, has a curious origin. Originally, in England in 1760, it was conferred on a society of literary persons of both sexes. The society derived its name from the blue worsted stockings always worn by Benjamin Stillingfleet, a distinguished writer, who was one of the most active promoters of this association. This term was subsequently conferred on literary ladies, from the fact that the accomplished and fascinating Mrs. Jerningham wore blue stock-

ings at the social and literary entertainments given by Lady Montague. *Woman* is the *wif* or *web*-man, who stays at home to spin, as distinguished from the *weap*-man, who goes abroad to use the weapon of war. The term "man" is, of course, generic, including both male and female. *Lady* primarily signifies bread-keeper. It is derived from the Anglo-Saxon, *hlafdie*, i. e., *hlafweardige*, bread-keeper, from *hlaf*, bread, loaf, and *weardian*, to keep, look after. *Waist* is the same as waste; that part of the figure which wastes,—that is, diminishes.

Canard has a very curious origin. M. Quêtelet, a French writer, in the "Annuaire de l'Académie Française," attributes the first application of this term to Norbert Cornelïssen, who, to give a sly hit at the ridiculous pieces of intelligence in the public journals, stated that an interesting experiment had just been made calculated to prove the voracity of ducks. Twenty were placed together; and one of them having been killed and cut up into the smallest possible pieces, feathers and all, was thrown to the other nineteen, and most gluttonously gobbled up. Another was then taken from the nineteen, and being chopped small like its predecessor, was served up to the eighteen, and at once devoured like the other; and so on to the last, who thus was placed in the position of having eaten his nineteen companions. This story, most pleasantly narrated, ran the round of all the journals of Europe. It then became almost forgotten for about a score of years, when it went back from America with amplifications; but the word remained in its novel signification.

Abominable was once supposed to have been derived from the Latin words *ab* (from) and *homo* (a man), meaning

repugnant to humanity. It really comes from *abominor*, which again is from *ab* and *omen;* and it conveys the idea of what is in a religious sense profane and detestable,—in short, of evil omen. Milton always applies it to devilish, profane, or idolatrous objects. *Poltroon* is *pollice truncus*, *i. e.*, with the thumb cut off,—*pollex*, Latin, meaning thumb, and *truncus*, maimed or mutilated. When the Roman empire was about falling in pieces, the valor of the citizens had so degenerated, that, to escape fighting, many cut off their right thumbs, thus disabling themselves from using the pike. *Farce* is derived from *farcire*, a Latin word meaning to stuff as with flour, herbs, and other ingredients in cooking. A farce is a comedy with little plot, stuffed with ludicrous incidents and expressions. *Racy* is from "race," meaning family breed, and signifies having the characteristic flavor of origin, savoring of the source.

Trivial may be from *trivium*, in the sense of *tres viæ*, a place where three roads meet, and thus indicate that which is common-place, or of daily occurrence. But it is more probably from *trivium*, in the sense in which the word was used in the Middle Ages, when it meant the course of three arts, grammar, logic, and rhetoric, which formed the common curriculum of the universities, as distinguished from the *quadrivium*, which embraced four more, namely, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. Trivial things in this sense may mean things that occur ordinarily, as distinguished from higher or more abstruse things. The word *quiz* has a remarkable origin, unless the etymologists who give its derivation are themselves quizzing their readers. It is said that many years ago, when one Daly was patentee of the Irish theatres, he spent the evening of a Saturday in company with many of the wits and men of fashion of

the day. Gambling was introduced, when the manager staked a large sum that he would have spoken, all through the principal streets of Dublin, by a certain hour next day, Sunday, a word having no meaning, and being derived from no known language. Wagers were laid, and stakes deposited. Daly repaired to the theatre, and dispatched all the servants and supernumeraries with the word "Quiz," which they chalked on every door and every shop window in town. Shops being all shut next day, everybody going to and coming from the different places of worship saw the word, and everybody repeated it, so that "Quiz" was heard all through Dublin; the circumstance of so strange a word being on every door and window caused much surprise, and ever since, should a strange story be attempted to be passed current, it draws forth the expression,—"You are *quizzing* me." Some person who has a just aversion to practical jokes, wittily defines a "quizzer" as "one who believes me to be a fool because I will not believe him to be a liar."

Huguenot is a word whose origin is still a *vexata quæstio* of etymology. Of the many derivations given, some of which are ridiculously fanciful, "Eignots," which Voltaire and others give from the German, *Eidgenossen*, confederates,—is the one generally received. A plausible derivation is from *Huguenot*, a small piece of money, which, in the time of Hugo Capet, was worth less than a denier. At the time of Amboisi's conspiracy, some of the petitioners fled through fear; whereupon some of the countrymen said they were poor fellows, not worth a Huguenot,—whence the nickname in question. *Pensive* is a picturesque word, from *pensare*, the frequentative of *pendere*, to weigh. The French have *pensée*, a thought, the result of mental weigh-

ing. A pensive figure is that in which a person appears to be holding an invisible balance of reflection. *Bumper* is a corruption of *le bon père*, meaning "the Holy Father," or Pope, who was once the great toast of every feast. As this was commonly the first toast, it was considered that the glasses would be desecrated by being again used.

Nice is derived by some etymologists from the Anglo-Saxon, *hnesc*, soft, effeminate; but there is good reason for believing that it is from the Latin, *nescius*, ignorant. "Wise, and nothing nice," says Chaucer; that is, no wise ignorant. If so, it is a curious instance of the extraordinary changes of meaning which words undergo, that "nice" should come to signify accurate or fastidious, which implies knowledge and taste rather than ignorance. The explanation is, that the diffidence of ignorance resembles the fastidious slowness of discernment. *Gibberish* is from a famous sage, Giber, an Arab, who sought for the philosopher's stone, and used, perhaps, senseless incantations. *Alert* is a picturesque word from the Italian, *all 'erte*,—on the mound or rampart. The "alert" man is one who is wide-awake and watchful, like the warder on the watch-tower, or the sentinel upon the rampart. *By-laws* are not, etymologically, laws of inferior importance, but the laws of "byes" or towns, as distinguished from the general laws of a kingdom. *By* is Danish for town or village; as "Whitby," White Town, "Derby," Deer Town, etc.

A writer in "Notes and Queries" suggests that the word *snobs* may be of classical origin, derived from *sine obola*, without a penny. It is not probable, however, that it was meant as a sneer at poverty only. A more ingenious suggestion is that, as the higher classes were called "nobs,"—i. e., *nobilitas*, the nobility,—the "s-nobs" were

those *sine nobilitate*, without any blue blood in their veins, or pure aristocratic breeding. *Humbug* is an expressive word, about the origin of which etymologists are disagreed. An ingenious explanation, not given in the dictionaries, is, that it is derived from *Hume of the Bog*, a Scotch laird, so called from his estate, who lived during the reign of William and Anne. He was celebrated in Edinburgh circles for his marvelous stories, which, in the exhausting draughts they made on his hearer's credulity, out-Munchausened Munchausen. Hence, any tough story was called a "a regular Hume of the Bog," or, by contraction, Humbug. Another etymology of *humbug* is a piece of Hamburg news; *i. e.*, a Stock Exchange canard. Webster derives the word from *hum*, to impose on, deceive, and *bug*, a frightful object, a bugbear. Wedgwood thinks it may come from the union of *hum* and *buzz*, signifying sound without sense. He cites a catch, set by Dr. Arne in "Notes and Queries":

> "*Buz*, quoth the blue fly,
> *Hum*, quoth the bee,
> *Buz* and *hum* they cry,
> And so do we."

Imbecile is from the Latin, *in* and *bacillum*, a walking-stick; one who through infirmity leans for support upon a stick. *Petrels* are little Peters, because, like the apostles, they can walk on the water. *Hocus pocus* is a corruption of *Hoc est corpus*, "this is the body," words once used in necromancy or jugglery. *Chagrin* is primarily a hard, granulated leather, which chafes the limbs; hence, secondarily, irritation or vexation. *Canon* is from a Greek word meaning "cane"; first a hollow rule or a cane used as a measure, then a law or rule. The word is identical with

"cannon," so called from its hollow, tube-like form. Hence it has been wittily said that the world in the Middle Ages was governed first by canons, and then by cannons,—first, by Saint Peter, and then by saltpetre.

Booby primarily denotes a person who gapes and stares about, wondering at everything. From the syllable *ba*, representing the opening of the mouth, are formed the French words *baier*, *béer*, to gape, and thence in the patois of the Hainault, *baia*, the mouth, and figuratively one who stands staring with open mouth, *boubié*. Webster thinks the word is derived from the French *boubie*, a waterfowl. *Pet*, a darling, is from the French *petit*, which comes from the Latin, *petitus*, sought after. "My pet" means literally "my sought after or desired one." *Petty* is also from the French, *petit*, little. *Assassin* is derived from the Persian, *hashish*, an intoxicating opiate. "The Assassins" were a tribe of fanatics, who lived in the mountains of Lebanon, and executed with terror and subtlety every order entrusted to them by their chief, the "Old Man of the Mountain." They made a jest of torture when seized, and were the terror alike of Turk and Christian. They resembled the Thugs of India. *Blunderbuss* (properly thunder-buss) is from the German *büchse*, applied to a rifle, a box; hence "arque*buss*" and "Brown *Bess*." *Bosh* is derived, according to some etymologists, from a Turkish word meaning "empty,"—according to others, from the German, *bosse*, a joke or trifle. Mr. Blackley, in his "Word-Gossip," says it is the pure gypsy word for "fiddle," which suggests the semi-sanctioned *fiddle-de-dee!* *Person* primarily meant an actor. The Roman theatres, which could hold thirty to forty thousand spectators, were so large that the actors wore masks containing a contrivance to render the voice

louder. Such a mask was called *persona*, *(per sonare*, to sound through,) because the voice *sounded through* it. By a common figure of speech, the word meaning "mask" *(persona)* was afterwards applied to its wearer; so *persona* came to signify "actor." But as all men are actors, playing each his part on the stage of life, the word "person" came afterwards to signify a man or woman. *Parson*, the "chief person" of a parish, is another form of the same word. *Curmudgeon* is probably from *corn-merchant*, one who tries to enrich himself by hoarding grain and withholding it from others; or it may be from the French, *coeur*, (the heart,) and *méchant* (wicked). *Haberdasher* is from the German, *Habt ihr das hier?* i. e., Have you this here? *Hoax* is from the Anglo-Saxon, *husc*, mockery or contempt; or, perhaps it is from *hocus-pocus*, which was at one time used to ridicule the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.

Right is from the Latin, *rectus*, ruled, proceeding in a straight line; *wrong* is the perfect participle of "*wring*," that which has been "wrung" or wrested from the right; just as in French *tort* is from *torqueo*, that which is twisted. *Humble-pie* is properly "umble-pie." The umbles were the entrails or coarser parts of the deer, the perquisite of the keeper or huntsman. *Pantaloon* is from the Italian, *piante leone*, *(panta-leone*, *pantaloon*,) "the Planter of the Lion"; that is, the Standard-Bearer of Venice. The Lion of St. Mark was the standard of Venice. "Pantaloon" was a masked character in the Italian comedy, the butt of the play, who wore breeches and stockings that were all of one piece. The Spanish language has *pañalon*, a slovenly fellow whose shirt hangs out of his breeches. *Cheat* is from the Latin, *cadere*, to fall. The

word "escheats" first denoted lands that *fell* to the crown by forfeiture. The "escheatours," who certified these to the Exchequer, practiced so much fraud, that, by a natural transition, the "escheatour" passed into "cheater," and "escheat" into "cheat."

Salary is from the Latin, *sal* (salt), which in the reign of the Emperor Augustus comprised the provisions, as well as the *pay*, of the Roman military officers. From "salary" came, probably, the expression, "He is not worth his *salt*," that is, his pay, or wages. *Kidnap* is from the German, *kind*, or Provincial English, *kid*, meaning "child," and *nap* or *nab*, "to steal,"—to steal children. *Hawk*, in Anglo-Saxon, *hafoc*, points to the havoc which that bird makes among the smaller ones; as *raven* expresses the greedy or "ravenous" disposition of the bird so named. *Owl* is said to be the past participle of "to yell," (as in Latin *ulula*, the screech-owl, is from *ululare,)* and differs from "howl" only in its spelling. *Solecism* is from *Soli*, a town of Cilicia, the people of which corrupted the pure Greek. *Squirrel* is from two Greek words, *σκια*, a shade, and *οὐρά*, a tail. *Sycophant* is primarily a "fig-shower"; one who informed the public officers of Attica that the law against the exportation of figs had been violated. Hence the word came to mean a common informer, a mean parasite. *Parasite*, from the Greek *παρά* beside, and *σῖτος*, food, means literally one who eats at the table of another,—a privilege which is apt to be paid for by obsequiousness and flattery.

Sarcasm, from the Greek, *σάρξ*, flesh, *καζω*, I tear, is literally a tearing of the flesh. *Tribulation* is from the Latin, *tribulum*, a kind of sledge or heavy roller, which did the work of the English flail, by hard grinding and

wearing, instead of by repeated light strokes. Troubles, afflictions and sorrows being the divinely appointed means for separating the chaff from the wheat of men's natures, — the light and trivial from the solid and valuable, — the early Christians, by a rustic but familiar metaphor, called these sorrows and trials "tribulations," threshings of the inner spiritual man, by which only could he be fitted for the heavenly garner. As Wither beautifully sings:

> "Till the mill the grains in pieces tear,
> The richness of the flour will scarce appear;
> So till men's persons great afflictions touch,
> If worth be found, their worth is not much;
> Because, like wheat in straw, they have not yet
> That value, which in threshing they may get."

Tabby, a familiar name of cats, is the French *tabis*, which comes from the Persian *retabi*, a rich watered silk, and denotes the wavy bars upon their coats. *Schooner* has a curious derivation. In 1713 Captain Andrew Robinson launched the first vessel of this kind, with gaffs instead of the lateen yards until then in use, and the luff of the sail bent to hoops on the mast. As she slipped down the ways a bystander exclaimed, "Oh, how she *scoons!*" — whereupon the builder, catching at the word, replied, "A *scooner* let her be!" Originally the word was spelled without the *h*. *Supercilious*, from *supercilium* (the eyebrow), is literally knitting the eyebrows in pride. *Slave* chronicles the contest between the Teutonic and Sclavonic or Slavonic races. When a German captured a Russian or Bohemian, he would call him a sclave or slave, whereby the word became associated with the idea of servitude. In Oriental France, in the eighth century, princes and bishops were rich in these captives.

Servant is from *servus*, which the Justinian code derives

from *servare*, to preserve,—because the victor preserved his captives alive, instead of killing them.

Scrupulous is from the Latin, *scrupulus*, a small, sharp stone, such as might get into a Roman traveler's open shoe and distress him, whence the further meaning of doubt or a source of doubt and hesitation. Afterwards the word came to express a measure of weight, the twenty-fourth part of an ounce; and hence to be scrupulous is to pay minute, nice and exact attention to matters often in themselves of small weight. *Plagiarism* is literally man-stealing. As books are one's mental offspring, the word came naturally to mean, first, the stealing of a book or manuscript which the thief published as his own; secondly, quoting from another man's writings without acknowledgment. *Parlor*, from *parler*, to speak, is therefore the talking-room, as *boudoir*, from *bouder*, to pout, is literally the pouting-room. *Egregious* is from the Latin *ex*, from, and *grege*, flock or herd. An "egregious" lie is one distinguished from the common herd of lies, such as one meets with in every patent-medicine advertisement and political newspaper. *Negotiate* is from *negotior*, compounded of *ne ego otior*, I am not idle.

The origin of the word *caucus* has long been a vexed question with etymologists. Till recently it was supposed by many to be a corruption of "caulkers," being derived from an association of these men in Boston, who met to organize resistance to England just before the Revolutionary War. Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull, of Hartford, Connecticut, has suggested a new and ingenious derivation of the term, which is more satisfactory, and probably correct. Strachey, in his "Historie of Travaile into Virginia," 1610–12 (printed by the Hakluyt Society, 1849), says that

the Chechahamanias, a free people, acknowledging the supremacy of Powhatan, were governed, not by a *iveroance*, commander, sent by Powhatan, but by their priests, with the assistance of their elders; and this board was called *cawcawwas*. Captain John Smith writes *cockerouse* for *cawcawwas*, in the sense of "captain"; but the English generally understood it in the sense of "counselor," and adopted it from the Indians, as Beverley states that it designates "one that has the honor to be of the king's or queen's council," a provincial councillor, just as Northern politicians now use the word *sachem*, and formerly used *mugwomp*. The verb from which *cawcawwas*, or *cockerouse*, comes means primarily "to talk to," hence to "harangue," "advise," "encourage," and is found in all Algonquin dialects, as Abnaki *kakesoo*, to incite, and Chippeway *gaganso* (*n* nasal), to exhort, urge, counsel. *Cawcawwas*, representing the adjective form of this verb, is "one who advises, promotes,"—a caucuser. *Manumit* is from *manus*, hand, and *mittere*, to dismiss,—to dismiss a slave with a slap of the hand, on setting him free. *Hypocrite* comes from a Greek word meaning one who questions and answers; hence one who converses on the stage, a player. *Nausea*, from the Greek ναύς, a ship, meant originally sea-sickness only. *Kennel*, a dog-house, is from the Italian, *canile*, and this from the Latin, *canis*, a dog. *Kennel*, in the sense of gutter, with its kindred words, *can*, *cane*, and *channel*, is derived from *canna*, a cane, which is like a tube.

Apple-pie order is a popular phrase of which few persons know the meaning. Does it signify in order, or in disorder? A writer in the "North-British Review" favors the latter interpretation. He thinks that it has nothing to do with *apple* or *pie*, in the common sense of those words.

He believes that it is a typographical term, and that it was originally "*Chapel pie.*" A printing-house was and is to this day called a chapel,—perhaps from the Chapel at Westminster Abbey, in which Caxton's earliest works are said to have been printed, and "pie" is type after it is "distributed" or broken up, and before it has been re-sorted. "'Pie' in this sense came from the confused and *perplexing rules of the 'Pie,' that is, the order for finding the lessons in Catholic times*, which those who have read or care to read the Preface to the 'Book of Common Prayer,' will find there expressed and denounced. Here is the passage: 'Moreover the number and hardness of the rules called the Pie, and the manifold changings of the service, was the cause that to turn the book only was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times there was more business to find out what should be read than to read it when it was found out.' To leave your type in 'pie' is to leave it unsorted and in confusion, and 'apple-pie order,' which we take to be 'chapel-pie order,' is to leave anything in a thorough mess. Those who like to take the other side, and assert that 'apple-pie order' means in perfect order, may still find their derivation in 'chapel-pie'; for the ordering and sorting of the 'pie' or type is enforced in every 'chapel' or printing-house by severe fines, and so 'chapel-pie order' would be such order of the type as the best friends of the chapel would wish to see."—*The bitter end*, a phrase often heard during the late Civil War, has a remarkable etymology. A ship's cable has always two ends. One end is fastened to the anchor and the other to the *bits*, or *bitts*, a frame of two strong pieces of timber fixed perpendicularly in the fore part of the ship, for the express purpose of holding the cables. Hence the "bit-

ter," or "bitter end," is the end fastened to the bitts; and when the cable is out to the "bitter end," it is all out; the extremity has come.

Few persons who utter the word *stranger*, suspect that it has its root, as Dugald Stewart has noted, in the single vowel *e*, the Latin preposition for "from." The links in the chain are,—e, ex, extra, extraneous, étranger, stranger. When a boy answers a lady, "*Yes'm*," he does not dream that his "'m" is a fragment of the five syllables, mea domina (madonna, madame, madam, ma'am, 'm). The words *thrall* and *thraldom* have an interesting history. They come to us from a period when it was customary to *thrill* or drill the ear of a slave in token of servitude; and hence the significance of Sir Thomas Browne's remark, "Bow not to the omnipotency of gold, nor *bore* thy ear to its servitude." The expression "*signing* one's name" takes us back to an age when most persons made their mark or "sign." We must not suppose that this practice was then, as now, a proof of the ignorance of the signer. Among the Saxons, not only illiterate persons made this sign, but, as an attestation of the good faith of the person signing, the mark of the cross was required to be attached to the name of those who could write. From its holy association, it was the symbol of an oath; and hence the expression "God save the mark!" which so long puzzled the commentators of Shakspeare, is now understood to be a form of ejaculation resembling an oath. It is said that Charlemagne, being unable to write, was compelled to dip the forefinger of his glove in ink, and smear it over the parchment when it was necessary that the imperial sign-manual should be fixed to an edict.

The language of savages teems with expressions of deep

interest both to the philologist and the student of human nature. Speech with them is a perpetual creation of utterances to image forth the total picture in their minds. The Indian "does not analyze his thoughts or separate his utterances; his thoughts rush forth in a troop. His speech is as a kindling cloud, not as radiant points of light." The Lenni Lenape Indians express by one polysyllable what with us requires seven monosyllables and three dissyllables, viz.: "Come with the canoe and take us across the river." This polysyllable is *nadholineen*, and it is formed by taking parts of several words and cementing them into one. The natives of the Society Isles have one word for the tail of a dog, another for the tail of a bird, and a third for the tail of a sheep, while for *tail* itself, *tail* in the abstract, they have no word whatever. The Mohicans have words for wood-cutting, cutting the head, etc., yet no verb meaning simply to cut. Some Indian tribes call a squirrel by a name signifying that he "can stick fast in a tree"; a mole, by a word signifying "carrying the right hand on the left shoulder"; and they have a name for a horse which means "having only one toe." Among the savages of the Pacific, *to think* is "to speak in the stomach."

WORDS OF ILLUSIVE ETYMOLOGY.

In the lapse of ages words undergo great changes of form, so that it becomes at last difficult or impossible to ascertain their origin. Terms, of which the composition was originally clear, are worn and rubbed by use like the pebbles which are fretted and rounded into shape and smoothness by the sea waves or by a rapid stream. Like the image and superscription of a coin, their meaning is

often so worn away that one cannot make even a probable guess at their origin. One of the commonest causes of the corruptions of words, by which their sources and original meanings are disguised, is the instinctive dislike we feel to the use of a word that is wholly new to us, and the consequent tendency to fasten upon it a meaning which shall remove its seemingly arbitrary character. Foreign words, therefore, when adopted into a language, are especially liable to these changes, being corrupted both in pronunciation and orthography. By thus Anglicizing them, we not only avoid the uncouth, barbarous sounds which are so offensive to the ear, but we help the memory by associating the words with others already known.

The mistakes which have been made in attempting to trace the origin of words thus disguised, have done not a little, at times, to bring philology into contempt. The philologist, unless he has much native good sense, and rules his inclinations with an iron rod, is apt to become a verbomaniac. There is a strange fascination in word-hunting, and his hobby-horse, it has been aptly said, is a strong-goer that trifles never balk. "To him the British Channel is a surface drain, the Alps and Apennines mere posts and rails, the Mediterranean a simple brook, and the Himalayas only an outlying cover." Cowper justly ridicules those word-hunters who, in their eagerness to make some startling discovery, never pause to consider whether there is any historic connection between two languages, one of which is supposed to have borrowed a word from another,—

> "learn'd philologists, who chase
> A panting syllable through time and space,
> Start it at home, and hunt it in the dark,
> To Gaul,—to Greece,—and into Noah's ark."

A fundamental rule, to be kept constantly in sight by those who would not etymologize at random, is, that no amount of resemblance between words in different languages is sufficient to prove their relationship, nor is any amount of seeming unlikeness in sound or form sufficient to disprove their consanguinity. Many etymologies are true which appear improbable, and many appear probable which are not true. As Max Müller says: "Sound etymology has nothing to do with sound. We know words to be of the same origin which have not a single letter in common, and which differ in meaning as much as black and white." Fuller amusingly says that "we are not to infer the Hebrew and the English to be cognate languages because one of the giants, son of Anak, was called *A-himan*"; yet some of his own etymologies, though witty and ingenious, are hardly more correct than this punning derivation. Thus *compliments*, he says, is derived from *à completè mentiri*, because compliments are in general completely mendacious; and he quotes approvingly Sir John Harrington's derivation of the old English *elf* and *goblin*, from the names of the two political factions of the Empire, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines.

Archbishop Trench speaks of an eminent philologist who deduced *girl* from *garrula*, girls being commonly talkative. *Frontispiece* is usually regarded as a piece or picture in front of a book; whereas it means literally "a front view," being from the Low Latin, *frontispicium*, the forefront of a house. The true origin of many words is hidden by errors in the spelling. *Bran-new* is brand-new, *i. e.*, "burnt new." *Grocer* should be "grosser," (one who sells in the gross); pigmy is properly "pygmy," as Worcester spells it, and means a thing the size of one's

fist (*πυγμή*). Policy (state-craft) is rightly spelled; but "policies of insurance" ought to have the "ll," the word being derived from *polliceor*, to promise or assure. *Island* looks as if it were compounded of *isle* and *land;* but it is the same word as the Anglo-Saxon *ealand* (water-land), compounded of *ea* (water) and *land*. So Jersey is literally *Cæsar's island*. *Lieutenant* has been pronounced *leftenant*, from a notion that this officer holds the *left* of the line while the captain holds the right. The word comes from the French, *lieu-tenant*, one holding the place of another.

Wiseacre has no connection with *acre*. The word is a corruption, both in spelling and pronunciation, of the German *weissager*, a wise-*sayer*, or sayer of wise maxims. *Gooseberry*, Dr. Johnson explains as "a fruit eaten as a sauce for goose." It is, however, a corruption of the German, *krausbeere*,—from *kraus* or *gorse*, crisp; and the fruit gets its name from the upright hairs with which it is covered. *Shame-faced* does not mean having a face denoting shame. It is from the Anglo-Saxon, *sceamfaest*, protected by shame. *Surname* is from the French, *surnom*, meaning additional name, and should not, therefore, be spelled *sirname*, as if it meant the name of one's sire. *Freemason* is not half Saxon, but is from the French, *frère-maçon*, brother mason. *Foolscap* is a corruption of the Italian, *foglio capo*, a full-sized sheet of paper. *Country-dance* is a corruption of the French *contre-danse*, in which the partners stand in opposite lines.

Bishop, which looks like an Anglo-Saxon word, is from the Greek. It means primarily an overseer, in Latin, *episcopus*, which the Saxons broke down into "biscop," and then softened into "bishop." There was formerly an adjective *bishoply;* but as, after the Norman Conquest, the

bishops, and those who discussed their rights and duties, used French and Latin rather than English, "episcopal" has taken its place. Among the foreign words most frequently corrupted are the names of plants, which gardeners, not understanding, change into words that sound like the true ones, and with which they are familiar. In their new costume they often lose all their original significance and beauty. To this source of corruption we owe such words as *dandelion*, from the French, *dent de lion* (lion's tooth); *rosemary*, from *ros marinus; quarter-sessions rose*, the meaningless name of the beautiful rose *des quatre saisons; Jerusalem artichoke*, into which, with a ludicrous disregard for geography, we have metamorphosed the sunflower artichoke, *articiocco girasole*, which came to us from Pery through Italy; and *sparrowgrass*, which we have substituted for *asparagus.*

Animals have fared no better than plants; the same dislike of outlandish words, which are meaningless to them, leads sailors to corrupt Bellerophon into Billy Ruffian, and hostlers to convert *Othello and Desdemona* into "Odd Fellow and Thursday morning," and *Lamprocles* into "Lamb and Pickles." The *souris dormeuse*, or sleeping mouse, has been transformed into *a dormouse;* the hog-fish, or *porc-pisce*, as Spenser terms him, is disguised as a *porpoise;* and the French *écrevisse* turns up a *crayfish* or *crawfish.* The transformations of the latter word, which has passed through three languages before attaining its present form, are among the most surprising feats of verbal legerdemain. Starting on its career as the old High German *krebiz*, it next appears in English as *crab*, and in German as *krebs*, or "crab," from the grabbing or clutching action of the animal. Next it crosses the Rhine, and becomes the

French *écrevisse;* then crosses the Channel, and takes the form of *krevys;* and, last of all, with a double effort at Anglicizing, it appears in modern English as *crawfish* or *crayfish*. The last two words noticed illustrate the tendency which is so strong, in the corruption of words, to invent new forms which shall be appropriate as well as significant, other examples of which we have in *wormwood* from *wermuth*, lant*horn* from *laterna*, *beefeater* from *buffetier*, rake*hell* from *racaille*, *catchrogue* from the Norman-French *cachreau*, a bum-bailiff, and *shoot* for *chute*, a fall or rapid. So the French, *beffroi*, a stronghold or tower,—a movable tower of several stories used in besieging,—has been corrupted into *bel*fry, though there is no such French word as *bell*.

Often the corrupted form gives birth to a wholly false explanation. Thus in the proverbial *dormir comme une taupe*, which has been twisted into the phrase *to sleep like a top*, there is no trace of the mole; nor in *Penny-come-quick*, any hint of Penne, Coombe, and Ick, the former name for Falmouth. The corruption of *Chateau Vert* into "Shotover" has led to the legend that Little John *shot over* the hill of that name near Oxford, England; and the corruption of *acheter*, to buy, into *achat*,—which in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was in London the word for trading, and was first pronounced and then written *acat*,—led to the story that Whittington, the famous lord mayor, obtained his wealth by selling and re-selling *a cat*. There is no hint in *somerset* of its derivation from the Italian, *soprasalto*, an overleap, through the French, *sobresault*, and the early English, "to somersault"; nor would the shrewdest guesser ever discover in *faire un faux pas*, to commit a blunder, the provincial saying, *to make a fox's paw*.

Among the most frequent corruptions are the names of places and persons. *Boulogne Mouth* has been converted by the British sailors into "Bull and Mouth"; and Surajah Dowlah, the name of the Bengal prince who figured in the famous Black Hole atrocity, the British soldiers persisted in Anglicizing into "Sir Roger Dowlas!" *Bedlam* is a corruption of *Bethlehem*, and gets its meaning from a London priory, St. Mary's of Bethlehem, which was converted into a lunatic asylum. Another striking illustration of the freaks of popular usage by which the etymology of words is obscured, is the word *causeway*. Mr. W. W. Skeat, in a late number of "Notes and Queries," states that the old spelling of the word was *calcies*. The Latin was *calceata via*, a road made with lime; hence the Spanish, *calzada*, a paved way, and the modern French, *chaussée*. "The English word," Mr. Skeats says, "used to be more often spelled *causey*, as for instance, by Cotgrave; and popular etymology, always on the alert to infuse some sort of meaning into a strange word, turned *causey* into *causeway*, with the trifling drawback that, while we all know what *way* means, no one can extract any sense out of *cause*."

Words from the dead languages have naturally undergone the most signal corruptions, many of them completely disguising the derivation. Sometimes the word is condensed, as in *alms*, from the Greek, ἐλεημοσύνη, in early English, *almesse*, now cut down to four letters; *summons*, a legal term, abbreviated (like the *fi. fa.* of the lawyers), from *submoneas; palsy*, an abridgment of *paralysis*, literally a relaxation; *quinsy*, in French, *esquinancie*, which, strange to say, is the same word as *synagogue*, coming, like this last, from συν, together, and ἄγω, to draw. *Megrim*

is a corruption of *hemicrany*, a pain affecting half of the head. *Treacle*, now applied only to molasses or its sirup, was originally viper's flesh made into a medicine for the viper's bite. It is called in French, *thériaque*, from a corresponding Greek word; in early English, *triacle*. *Zero* is a contraction of the Italian *zephiro*, a zephyr, a breath of air, a nothing. Another name for it is *cipher*, from the Arabic, *cifr*, empty.

CONTRADICTORY MEANINGS.

Among the curious phenomena of language one of the most singular is the use of the same word in two distinct senses, directly opposed to each other. Ideas are associated in the mind not only by resemblance but by contrast; and thus the same root, slightly modified, may express the most opposite meanings. A striking example of this, is the word *fast*, which is full of contradictory meanings. A clock is called "fast," when it goes too quickly; but a man is told to stand "fast," when he is desired to stand still. Men "fast" when they have nothing to eat; and they eat "fast" after a long abstinence. "Fast" men, as we have already seen, are apt to be very "loose" in their habits. When "fast" is used in the sense of "abstinence," the idea may be, as in the Latin, *abstineo*, holding back from food; or the word may come from the Gothic, *fastan*, "to keep" or "observe,"—that is, the ordinance of the church.

The word *nervous* may mean either possessing, or wanting nerve. A "nervous" writer is one who has force and energy; a nervous man is one who is weak, sensitive to trifles, easily excited. The word *post*, from the Latin *positum*, "placed," is used in the most various senses.

We speak of a *post*-office, of *post*-haste, of *post*-horses, and of *post*-ing a ledger. The contradiction in these meanings is more apparent than real. The idea of *placing* is common to them all. Before the invention of railways, letters were transmitted from place to place (or post to post) by relays of horses stationed at intervals, so that no delay might occur. The "post"-office used this means of communication, and the horses were said to travel "post"-haste. To "post" a ledger is to place or register its several items.

The word *to let* generally means to permit; but in the Bible, in Shakspeare, and in legal phraseology, it often has the very opposite meaning. Thus Hamlet says, "I'll make a ghost of him that lets me," that is, interferes with or obstructs me; and in law-books "without let or hindrance" is a phrase of frequent occurrence. It should be remarked, however, that *to let*, in the first sense, is from the Saxon, *laetan;* in the second, from *letjan.* The word *to cleave* may mean either to adhere to closely, as when Cowper says, "Sophistry cleaves close and protects sin's rotten trunk"; or it may mean to split or to rend asunder, as in the sentence, "He cleaved the stick at one blow." According to Mätzner, the word in the first sense is from the Anglo-Saxon, *cleofan, clufan;* in the last sense, it is from *clifan, clifian.* The word *dear* has the two meanings of "prized" because you have it, and "expensive" because you want it. The word *lee* has very different acceptations in *lee*-side and *lee*-shore.

The word *mistaken* has quite opposite meanings. "You are mistaken" may mean "You mistake," or "You are misunderstood," or "taken for somebody else." In the line

"*Mistaken* souls that dream of heaven,"

in a popular hymn, the word is used, of course, in the former sense. The adjective *mortal* means both "deadly" and "liable to death." Of the large number of adjectives ending in "able" or "ible" some have a subjective and others an objective sense. A "terrible" sight is one that is able to inspire terror; but a "readable" book is one which you can read. It is said that the word *wit* is used in Pope's "Essay on Criticism" with at least seven different meanings.

The prefixes *un* and *in* are equivocal. Commonly they have a negative force, as in "unnecessary," "incomplete." But sometimes, both in verbs and adjectives, they have a positive or intensive meaning, as in the words "*in*tense," "*in*fatuated," "*in*valuable." To "*in*vigorate" one's physical system by exercise, is not to lessen, but to increase one's energy. The verb "*unloose*" should, by analogy, signify "to tie," just as *untie* means "to loose." *In*habitable should signify not habitable, according to the most frequent sense of *in*. *To unravel* means the same as *to ravel;* to *unrip*, the same as *to rip*. Johnson sanctions the use of the negative prefix in these two words, but Richardson and Webster condemn it as superfluous. Walton, in his "Angler," tells an amusing anecdote touching the two words. "We heard," he says, "a high contention amongst the beggars, whether it was easiest to *rip* a cloak or *unrip* a cloak. One beggar affirmed it was all one; but that was denied, by asking her, if doing and undoing were all one. Then another said, 'twas easiest to *unrip* a cloak, for that was to let it alone; but she was answered by asking how she could *unrip* it, if she let it alone."

This opposition in the meanings of a word is a phenomenon not altogether peculiar to the English language. In

Greek, *χρεία* means both "use" and "need," and *λάω* means both "to wish" and "to take"; in Latin, *unicus* implies singularity,—*unitas*, association. Many other examples might be cited to show that "as rays of light may be reflected and refracted in all possible ways from their primary direction, so the meaning of a word may be deflected from its original bearing in a variety of manners; and consequently we cannot well reach the primitive force of the term unless we know the precise gradations through which it has gone."

Several writers on our language have noticed a singular tendency to limit or narrow the signification of certain words, whose etymology would suggest a far wider application. Why should we not *retaliate* (that is, pay back in kind, *res*, *talis*,) kindnesses as well as injuries? Why should we *resent* (feel again) insults, and not affectionate words and deeds? Why should our hate, animosity, hostility, and other bad passions, be *inveterate* (that is, gain strength by age), but our better feelings, love, kindness, charity, never? Byron showed a true appreciation of the better uses to which the word might be put, when he subscribed a letter to a friend, "Yours inveterately, Byron."

In some of our nouns there is a nice distinction of meaning between the singular and the plural. A *minute* is a fraction of time; *minutes* are notes of a speech, conversation, etc. The *manner* in which a man enters a drawing-room may be unexceptionable, while his *manners* are very bad. When the "Confederates" threatened to pull down the American *colors* at New Orleans, they did it under *color* of right. A person was once asked whether a certain lawyer had got rich by his practice? "No," was the sarcastic reply, "but by his practices."

CHAPTER XIV.

COMMON IMPROPRIETIES OF SPEECH.

In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold,
Alike fantastic if too new or old;
Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.—POPE.

If a gentleman be to study any language, it ought to be that of his own country.—LOCKE.

Aristocracy and exclusiveness tend to final overthrow, in language as well as in politics.—W. D. WHITNEY.

A tendency to slang, to colloquial inelegancies, and even vulgarities, is the besetting sin against which we, as Americans, have especially to guard and to struggle.—IB.

ONE of the most gratifying signs of the times is the deep interest which both our scholars and our people are beginning to manifest in the study of our noble English tongue. Perhaps nothing has contributed more to awaken a public interest in this matter, and to call attention to some of the commonest improprieties of speech, than the publication of "The Queen's English" and "The Dean's English," and the various criticisms which have been provoked in England and in the United States by the Moon-Alford controversy. Hundreds of persons who before felt a profound indifference to this subject, have had occasion to thank the Dean for awakening their curiosity in regard to it; and hundreds more who otherwise would never have read his dogmatic small-talk, or Mr. Moon's trenchant dissection of it, have suddenly found themselves, in consequence of the newspaper criticisms of the two books, deeply interested in questions of grammar, and now, with

their appetites whetted, will continue the study of their own language, till they have mastered all its difficulties, and familiarized themselves with all its idioms and idiotisms. Of such discussions we can hardly have too many, and just now they are imperiously needed to check the deluge of barbarisms, solecisms, and improprieties, with which our language is threatened. Not only does political freedom make every man in America an inventor, alike of labor-saving machines and of labor-saving words, but the mixture of nationalities is constantly coining and exchanging new forms of speech, of which our busy Bartletts, in their lists of Americanisms, find it impossible to keep account.

It is not merely our spoken language that is disfigured by these blemishes; but our written language,— the prose of the leading English authors,— exhibits more slovenliness and looseness of diction, than is found in any other literature. That this is due in part to the very character of the language itself, there can be no doubt. Its simplicity of structure and its copiousness both tend to prevent its being used with accuracy and care; and it is so hospitable to alien words that it needs more powerful securities against revolution than other languages of less heterogeneous composition. But the chief cause must be found in the character of the English-speaking race. There is in our very blood a certain lawlessness, which makes us intolerant of syntactical rules, and restless under pedagogical restraints. "Our sturdy English ancestors," says Blackstone, "held it beneath the condition of a freeman to appear, or to do any other act, at the precise time appointed." The same proud, independent spirit which made the Saxons of old rebel against the servitude of

punctuality, prompts their descendants to spurn the yoke of grammar and purism. In America this scorn of obedience, whether to political authority or philological, is fostered and intensified by the very genius of our institutions. We seem to doubt whether we are entirely free, unless we apply the Declaration of Independence to our language, and carry the Monroe doctrine even into our grammar.

The degree to which this lawlessness has been carried will be seen more strikingly if we compare our English literature with the literature of France. It has been justly said that the language of that country is a science in itself, and the labor bestowed on the acquisition of it has the effect of vividly impressing on the mind both the faults and the beauties of every writer's style. Method and perspicuity are its very essence; and there is hardly a writer of note who does not attend to these requisites with scrupulous care. Let a French writer of distinction violate any cardinal rule of grammar, and he is pounced upon instantly by the critics, and laughed at from Calais to Marseilles. When Boileau, who is a marvel of verbal and grammatical correctness, made a slip in the first line of his Ninth Satire,

"C'est *à* vous, mon Esprit, *à* qui je veux parler,"

the grammatical sensibility of the French ear was shocked to a degree that we, who tolerate the grossest solecisms, find it hard to estimate. For two centuries the blunder has been quoted by every writer on grammar, and impressed on the memory of every schoolboy. Indeed, such is the national fastidiousness on this subject, that it has been doubted whether a single line in Boileau has been

so often quoted for its beauty, as this unfortunate one for its lack of grammar. When did an English or an American writer thus offend the critical ears of his countrymen, even though he were an Alison, sinning against Lindley Murray on every page?

We are no friend to hypercriticism, or to that finical niceness which cares more for the body than for the soul of language, more for the outward expression than for the thought which it incarnates. It is, no doubt, possible to be so over-nice in the use of words and the construction of sentences as to sap the vitality of our speech. We may so refine our expression, by continual straining in our critical sieves, as to impair both the strength and the flexibility of our noble English tongue. There are some verbal critics, who, apparently go so far as to hold that every word must have an invariable meaning, and that all relations of thoughts must be indicated by absolute and invariable formulas, thus reducing verbal expression to the rigid inflexibility of a mathematical equation. If we understand Mr. Moon's censures of Murray and Alford, some of them are based on the assumption that an ellipsis is rarely, if ever, permissible in English speech. We have no sympathy with such extremists, nor with the verbal purists who challenge all words and phrases that cannot be found in the "wells of English undefiled," that have been open for more than a hundred years. Language is a living, organic thing, and by the very law of its life must always be in a fluctuating state. To petrify it into immutable forms, to preserve it as one preserves fruits and flowers in spirits of wine and herbariums, is as impossible as it would be undesirable, if we would have it a medium for the ever-changing thoughts of man.

French *écrevisse;* then crosses the Channel, and takes the form of *krevys;* and, last of all, with a double effort at Anglicizing, it appears in modern English as *crawfish* or *crayfish*. The last two words noticed illustrate the tendency which is so strong, in the corruption of words, to invent new forms which shall be appropriate as well as significant, other examples of which we have in *wormwood* from *wermuth*, lant*horn* from *laterna*, *beefeater* from *buffetier*, rake*hell* from *racaille*, *catchrogue* from the Norman-French *cachreau*, a bum-bailiff, and *shoot* for *chute*, a fall or rapid. So the French, *beffroi*, a stronghold or tower,—a movable tower of several stories used in besieging,—has been corrupted into *bel*fry, though there is no such French word as *bell*.

Often the corrupted form gives birth to a wholly false explanation. Thus in the proverbial *dormir comme une taupe*, which has been twisted into the phrase *to sleep like a top*, there is no trace of the mole; nor in *Penny-come-quick*, any hint of Penne, Coombe, and Ick, the former name for Falmouth. The corruption of *Chateau Vert* into "Shotover" has led to the legend that Little John *shot over* the hill of that name near Oxford, England; and the corruption of *acheter*, to buy, into *achat*,—which in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was in London the word for trading, and was first pronounced and then written *acat*,—led to the story that Whittington, the famous lord mayor, obtained his wealth by selling and re-selling *a cat*. There is no hint in *somerset* of its derivation from the Italian, *soprasalto*, an overleap, through the French, *sobresault*, and the early English, "to somersault"; nor would the shrewdest guesser ever discover in *faire un faux pas*, to commit a blunder, the provincial saying, *to make a fox's paw*.

Among the most frequent corruptions are the names of places and persons. *Boulogne Mouth* has been converted by the British sailors into "Bull and Mouth"; and Surajah Dowlah, the name of the Bengal prince who figured in the famous Black Hole atrocity, the British soldiers persisted in Anglicizing into "Sir Roger Dowlas!" *Bedlam* is a corruption of *Bethlehem*, and gets its meaning from a London priory, St. Mary's of Bethlehem, which was converted into a lunatic asylum. Another striking illustration of the freaks of popular usage by which the etymology of words is obscured, is the word *causeway*. Mr. W. W. Skeat, in a late number of "Notes and Queries," states that the old spelling of the word was *calcies*. The Latin was *calceata via*, a road made with lime; hence the Spanish, *calzada*, a paved way, and the modern French, *chaussée*. "The English word," Mr. Skeats says, "used to be more often spelled *causey*, as for instance, by Cotgrave; and popular etymology, always on the alert to infuse some sort of meaning into a strange word, turned *causey* into *causeway*, with the trifling drawback that, while we all know what *way* means, no one can extract any sense out of *cause*."

Words from the dead languages have naturally undergone the most signal corruptions, many of them completely disguising the derivation. Sometimes the word is condensed, as in *alms*, from the Greek, ἐλεημοσύνη, in early English, *almesse*, now cut down to four letters; *summons*, a legal term, abbreviated (like the *fi. fa.* of the lawyers), from *submoneas; palsy*, an abridgment of *paralysis*, literally a relaxation; *quinsy*, in French, *esquinancie*, which, strange to say, is the same word as *synagogue*, coming, like this last, from συν, together, and ἄγω, to draw. *Megrim*

is a corruption of *hemicrany*, a pain affecting half of the head. *Treacle*, now applied only to molasses or its sirup, was originally viper's flesh made into a medicine for the viper's bite. It is called in French, *thériaque*, from a corresponding Greek word; in early English, *triacle*. *Zero* is a contraction of the Italian *zephiro*, a zephyr, a breath of air, a nothing. Another name for it is *cipher*, from the Arabic, *cifr*, empty.

CONTRADICTORY MEANINGS.

Among the curious phenomena of language one of the most singular is the use of the same word in two distinct senses, directly opposed to each other. Ideas are associated in the mind not only by resemblance but by contrast; and thus the same root, slightly modified, may express the most opposite meanings. A striking example of this, is the word *fast*, which is full of contradictory meanings. A clock is called "fast," when it goes too quickly; but a man is told to stand "fast," when he is desired to stand still. Men "fast" when they have nothing to eat; and they eat "fast" after a long abstinence. "Fast" men, as we have already seen, are apt to be very "loose" in their habits. When "fast" is used in the sense of "abstinence," the idea may be, as in the Latin, *abstineo*, holding back from food; or the word may come from the Gothic, *fastan*, "to keep" or "observe,"—that is, the ordinance of the church.

The word *nervous* may mean either possessing, or wanting nerve. A "nervous" writer is one who has force and energy; a nervous man is one who is weak, sensitive to trifles, easily excited. The word *post*, from the Latin *positum*, "placed," is used in the most various senses.

We speak of a *post*-office, of *post*-haste, of *post*-horses, and of *post*-ing a ledger. The contradiction in these meanings is more apparent than real. The idea of *placing* is common to them all. Before the invention of railways, letters were transmitted from place to place (or post to post) by relays of horses stationed at intervals, so that no delay might occur. The "post"-office used this means of communication, and the horses were said to travel "post"-haste. To "post" a ledger is to place or register its several items.

The word *to let* generally means to permit; but in the Bible, in Shakspeare, and in legal phraseology, it often has the very opposite meaning. Thus Hamlet says, "I'll make a ghost of him that lets me," that is, interferes with or obstructs me; and in law-books "without let or hindrance" is a phrase of frequent occurrence. It should be remarked, however, that *to let*, in the first sense, is from the Saxon, *laetan;* in the second, from *letjan.* The word *to cleave* may mean either to adhere to closely, as when Cowper says, "Sophistry cleaves close and protects sin's rotten trunk"; or it may mean to split or to rend asunder, as in the sentence, "He cleaved the stick at one blow." According to Mätzner, the word in the first sense is from the Anglo-Saxon, *cleofan*, *clufan;* in the last sense, it is from *clifan*, *clifian.* The word *dear* has the two meanings of "prized" because you have it, and "expensive" because you want it. The word *lee* has very different acceptations in *lee*-side and *lee*-shore.

The word *mistaken* has quite opposite meanings. "You are mistaken" may mean "You mistake," or "You are misunderstood," or "taken for somebody else." In the line

"*Mistaken* souls that dream of heaven,"

in a popular hymn, the word is used, of course, in the former sense. The adjective *mortal* means both "deadly" and "liable to death." Of the large number of adjectives ending in "able" or "ible" some have a subjective and others an objective sense. A "terrible" sight is one that is able to inspire terror; but a "readable" book is one which you can read. It is said that the word *wit* is used in Pope's "Essay on Criticism" with at least seven different meanings.

The prefixes *un* and *in* are equivocal. Commonly they have a negative force, as in "unnecessary," "incomplete." But sometimes, both in verbs and adjectives, they have a positive or intensive meaning, as in the words "*in*tense," "*in*fatuated," "*in*valuable." To "*in*vigorate" one's physical system by exercise, is not to lessen, but to increase one's energy. The verb "*unloose*" should, by analogy, signify "to tie," just as *untie* means "to loose." *In*habitable should signify not habitable, according to the most frequent sense of *in*. *To unravel* means the same as *to ravel;* to *unrip*, the same as *to rip*. Johnson sanctions the use of the negative prefix in these two words, but Richardson and Webster condemn it as superfluous. Walton, in his "Angler," tells an amusing anecdote touching the two words. "We heard," he says, "a high contention amongst the beggars, whether it was easiest to *rip* a cloak or *unrip* a cloak. One beggar affirmed it was all one; but that was denied, by asking her, if doing and undoing were all one. Then another said, 'twas easiest to *unrip* a cloak, for that was to let it alone; but she was answered by asking how she could *unrip* it, if she let it alone."

This opposition in the meanings of a word is a phenomenon not altogether peculiar to the English language. In

Greek, *χρεία* means both "use" and "need," and *λάω* means both "to wish" and "to take"; in Latin, *unicus* implies singularity,—*unitas*, association. Many other examples might be cited to show that "as rays of light may be reflected and refracted in all possible ways from their primary direction, so the meaning of a word may be deflected from its original bearing in a variety of manners: and consequently we cannot well reach the primitive force of the term unless we know the precise gradations through which it has gone."

Several writers on our language have noticed a singular tendency to limit or narrow the signification of certain words, whose etymology would suggest a far wider application. Why should we not *retaliate* (that is, pay back in kind, *res*, *talis*,) kindnesses as well as injuries? Why should we *resent* (feel again) insults, and not affectionate words and deeds? Why should our hate, animosity, hostility, and other bad passions, be *inveterate* (that is, gain strength by age), but our better feelings, love, kindness, charity, never? Byron showed a true appreciation of the better uses to which the word might be put, when he subscribed a letter to a friend, "Yours inveterately, Byron."

In some of our nouns there is a nice distinction of meaning between the singular and the plural. A *minute* is a fraction of time; *minutes* are notes of a speech, conversation, etc. The *manner* in which a man enters a drawing-room may be unexceptionable, while his *manners* are very bad. When the "Confederates" threatened to pull down the American *colors* at New Orleans, they did it under *color* of right. A person was once asked whether a certain lawyer had got rich by his practice? "No," was the sarcastic reply, "but by his practices."

CHAPTER XIV.

COMMON IMPROPRIETIES OF SPEECH.

In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold,
Alike fantastic if too new or old;
Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.—POPE.

If a gentleman be to study any language, it ought to be that of his own country.—LOCKE.

Aristocracy and exclusiveness tend to final overthrow, in language as well as in politics.—W. D. WHITNEY.

A tendency to slang, to colloquial inelegancies, and even vulgarities, is the besetting sin against which we, as Americans, have especially to guard and to struggle.—IB.

ONE of the most gratifying signs of the times is the deep interest which both our scholars and our people are beginning to manifest in the study of our noble English tongue. Perhaps nothing has contributed more to awaken a public interest in this matter, and to call attention to some of the commonest improprieties of speech, than the publication of "The Queen's English" and "The Dean's English," and the various criticisms which have been provoked in England and in the United States by the Moon-Alford controversy. Hundreds of persons who before felt a profound indifference to this subject, have had occasion to thank the Dean for awakening their curiosity in regard to it; and hundreds more who otherwise would never have read his dogmatic small-talk, or Mr. Moon's trenchant dissection of it, have suddenly found themselves, in consequence of the newspaper criticisms of the two books, deeply interested in questions of grammar, and now, with

their appetites whetted, will continue the study of their own language, till they have mastered all its difficulties, and familiarized themselves with all its idioms and idiotisms. Of such discussions we can hardly have too many, and just now they are imperiously needed to check the deluge of barbarisms, solecisms, and improprieties, with which our language is threatened. Not only does political freedom make every man in America an inventor, alike of labor-saving machines and of labor-saving words, but the mixture of nationalities is constantly coining and exchanging new forms of speech, of which our busy Bartletts, in their lists of Americanisms, find it impossible to keep account.

It is not merely our spoken language that is disfigured by these blemishes; but our written language,— the prose of the leading English authors,— exhibits more slovenliness and looseness of diction, than is found in any other literature. That this is due in part to the very character of the language itself, there can be no doubt. Its simplicity of structure and its copiousness both tend to prevent its being used with accuracy and care; and it is so hospitable to alien words that it needs more powerful securities against revolution than other languages of less heterogeneous composition. But the chief cause must be found in the character of the English-speaking race. There is in our very blood a certain lawlessness, which makes us intolerant of syntactical rules, and restless under pedagogical restraints. "Our sturdy English ancestors," says Blackstone, "held it beneath the condition of a freeman to appear, or to do any other act, at the precise time appointed." The same proud, independent spirit which made the Saxons of old rebel against the servitude of

those *sine nobilitate*, without any blue blood in their veins, or pure aristocratic breeding. *Humbug* is an expressive word, about the origin of which etymologists are disagreed. An ingenious explanation, not given in the dictionaries, is, that it is derived from *Hume of the Bog*, a Scotch laird, so called from his estate, who lived during the reign of William and Anne. He was celebrated in Edinburgh circles for his marvelous stories, which, in the exhausting draughts they made on his hearer's credulity, out-Munchausened Munchausen. Hence, any tough story was called a "a regular Hume of the Bog," or, by contraction, Humbug. Another etymology of *humbug* is a piece of Hamburg news; *i. e.*, a Stock Exchange canard. Webster derives the word from *hum*, to impose on, deceive, and *bug*, a frightful object, a bugbear. Wedgwood thinks it may come from the union of *hum* and *buzz*, signifying sound without sense. He cites a catch, set by Dr. Arne in "Notes and Queries":

> "*Buz*, quoth the blue fly,
> *Hum*, quoth the bee,
> *Buz* and *hum* they cry,
> And so do we."

Imbecile is from the Latin, *in* and *bacillum*, a walking-stick; one who through infirmity leans for support upon a stick. *Petrels* are little Peters, because, like the apostles, they can walk on the water. *Hocus pocus* is a corruption of *Hoc est corpus*, "this is the body," words once used in necromancy or jugglery. *Chagrin* is primarily a hard, granulated leather, which chafes the limbs; hence, secondarily, irritation or vexation. *Canon* is from a Greek word meaning "cane"; first a hollow rule or a cane used as a measure, then a law or rule. The word is identical with

"cannon," so called from its hollow, tube-like form. Hence it has been wittily said that the world in the Middle Ages was governed first by canons, and then by cannons,—first, by Saint Peter, and then by saltpetre.

Booby primarily denotes a person who gapes and stares about, wondering at everything. From the syllable *ba,* representing the opening of the mouth, are formed the French words *baier*, *béer,* to gape, and thence in the patois of the Hainault, *baia*, the mouth, and figuratively one who stands staring with open mouth, *boubié.* Webster thinks the word is derived from the French *boubie*, a waterfowl. *Pet*, a darling, is from the French *petit*, which comes from the Latin, *petitus*, sought after. "My pet" means literally "my sought after or desired one." *Petty* is also from the French, *petit*, little. *Assassin* is derived from the Persian, *hashish*, an intoxicating opiate. "The Assassins" were a tribe of fanatics, who lived in the mountains of Lebanon, and executed with terror and subtlety every order entrusted to them by their chief, the "Old Man of the Mountain." They made a jest of torture when seized, and were the terror alike of Turk and Christian. They resembled the Thugs of India. *Blunderbuss* (properly thunder-buss) is from the German *büchse*, applied to a rifle, a box; hence "arque*buss*" and "Brown *Bess.*" *Bosh* is derived, according to some etymologists, from a Turkish word meaning "empty,"—according to others, from the German, *bosse*, a joke or trifle. Mr. Blackley, in his "Word-Gossip," says it is the pure gypsy word for "fiddle," which suggests the semi-sanctioned *fiddle-de-dee!* *Person* primarily meant an actor. The Roman theatres, which could hold thirty to forty thousand spectators, were so large that the actors wore masks containing a contrivance to render the voice

louder. Such a mask was called *persona*, (*per sonare*, to sound through,) because the voice *sounded through* it. By a common figure of speech, the word meaning "mask" (*persona*) was afterwards applied to its wearer; so *persona* came to signify "actor." But as all men are actors, playing each his part on the stage of life, the word "person" came afterwards to signify a man or woman. *Parson*, the "chief person" of a parish, is another form of the same word. *Curmudgeon* is probably from *corn-merchant*, one who tries to enrich himself by hoarding grain and withholding it from others; or it may be from the French, *coeur*, (the heart,) and *méchant* (wicked). *Haberdasher* is from the German, *Habt ihr das hier?* i. e., Have you this here? *Hoax* is from the Anglo-Saxon, *husc*, mockery or contempt; or, perhaps it is from *hocus-pocus*, which was at one time used to ridicule the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.

Right is from the Latin, *rectus*, ruled, proceeding in a straight line; *wrong* is the perfect participle of "*wring*," that which has been "wrung" or wrested from the right; just as in French *tort* is from *torqueo*, that which is twisted. *Humble-pie* is properly "umble-pie." The umbles were the entrails or coarser parts of the deer, the perquisite of the keeper or huntsman. *Pantaloon* is from the Italian, *piante leone*, (*panta-leone*, *pantaloon*,) "the Planter of the Lion": that is, the Standard-Bearer of Venice. The Lion of St. Mark was the standard of Venice. "Pantaloon" was a masked character in the Italian comedy, the butt of the play, who wore breeches and stockings that were all of one piece. The Spanish language has *pañalon*, a slovenly fellow whose shirt hangs out of his breeches. *Cheat* is from the Latin, *cadere*, to fall. The

word "escheats" first denoted lands that *fell* to the crown by forfeiture. The "escheatours," who certified these to the Exchequer, practiced so much fraud, that, by a natural transition, the "escheatour" passed into "cheater," and "escheat" into "cheat."

Salary is from the Latin, *sal* (salt), which in the reign of the Emperor Augustus comprised the provisions, as well as the *pay*, of the Roman military officers. From "salary" came, probably, the expression, "He is not worth his *salt*," that is, his pay, or wages. *Kidnap* is from the German, *kind*, or Provincial English, *kid*, meaning "child," and *nap* or *nab*, "to steal,"—to steal children. *Hawk*, in Anglo-Saxon, *hafoc*, points to the havoc which that bird makes among the smaller ones; as *raven* expresses the greedy or "ravenous" disposition of the bird so named. *Owl* is said to be the past participle of "to yell," (as in Latin *ulula*, the screech-owl, is from *ululare,)* and differs from "howl" only in its spelling. *Solecism* is from *Soli*, a town of Cilicia, the people of which corrupted the pure Greek. *Squirrel* is from two Greek words, *σκια*, a shade, and *οὐρά*, a tail. *Sycophant* is primarily a "fig-shower"; one who informed the public officers of Attica that the law against the exportation of figs had been violated. Hence the word came to mean a common informer, a mean parasite. *Parasite*, from the Greek *παρά* beside, and *σῖτος*, food, means literally one who eats at the table of another,—a privilege which is apt to be paid for by obsequiousness and flattery.

Sarcasm, from the Greek, *σάρξ*, flesh, *καζω*, I tear, is literally a tearing of the flesh. *Tribulation* is from the Latin, *tribulum*, a kind of sledge or heavy roller, which did the work of the English flail, by hard grinding and

wearing, instead of by repeated light strokes. Troubles, afflictions and sorrows being the divinely appointed means for separating the chaff from the wheat of men's natures, — the light and trivial from the solid and valuable, — the early Christians, by a rustic but familiar metaphor, called these sorrows and trials "tribulations," threshings of the inner spiritual man, by which only could he be fitted for the heavenly garner. As Wither beautifully sings:

> "Till the mill the grains in pieces tear,
> The richness of the flour will scarce appear;
> So till men's persons great afflictions touch,
> If worth be found, their worth is not much;
> Because, like wheat in straw, they have not yet
> That value, which in threshing they may get."

Tabby, a familiar name of cats, is the French *tabis*, which comes from the Persian *retabi*, a rich watered silk, and denotes the wavy bars upon their coats. *Schooner* has a curious derivation. In 1713 Captain Andrew Robinson launched the first vessel of this kind, with gaffs instead of the lateen yards until then in use, and the luff of the sail bent to hoops on the mast. As she slipped down the ways a bystander exclaimed, "Oh, how she *scoons!*" — whereupon the builder, catching at the word, replied, "A *scooner* let her be!" Originally the word was spelled without the *h*. *Supercilious*, from *supercilium* (the eyebrow), is literally knitting the eyebrows in pride. *Slave* chronicles the contest between the Teutonic and Sclavonic or Slavonic races. When a German captured a Russian or Bohemian, he would call him a sclave or slave, whereby the word became associated with the idea of servitude. In Oriental France, in the eighth century, princes and bishops were rich in these captives.

Servant is from *servus*, which the Justinian code derives

from *serrare*, to preserve,—because the victor preserved his captives alive, instead of killing them.

Scrupulous is from the Latin, *scrupulus*, a small, sharp stone, such as might get into a Roman traveler's open shoe and distress him, whence the further meaning of doubt or a source of doubt and hesitation. Afterwards the word came to express a measure of weight, the twenty-fourth part of an ounce; and hence to be scrupulous is to pay minute, nice and exact attention to matters often in themselves of small weight. *Plagiarism* is literally man-stealing. As books are one's mental offspring, the word came naturally to mean, first, the stealing of a book or manuscript which the thief published as his own; secondly, quoting from another man's writings without acknowledgment. *Parlor*, from *parler*, to speak, is therefore the talking-room, as *boudoir*, from *bouder*, to pout, is literally the pouting-room. *Egregious* is from the Latin *ex*, from, and *grege*, flock or herd. An "egregious" lie is one distinguished from the common herd of lies, such as one meets with in every patent-medicine advertisement and political newspaper. *Negotiate* is from *negotior*, compounded of *ne ego otior*, I am not idle.

The origin of the word *caucus* has long been a vexed question with etymologists. Till recently it was supposed by many to be a corruption of "caulkers," being derived from an association of these men in Boston, who met to organize resistance to England just before the Revolutionary War. Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull, of Hartford, Connecticut, has suggested a new and ingenious derivation of the term, which is more satisfactory, and probably correct. Strachey, in his "Historie of Travaile into Virginia," 1610–12 (printed by the Hakluyt Society, 1849), says that

beginning thus: "Resolved, that the Republicans (or Democrats) of this county be recommended to meet," etc.

Differ with is often used, in public debate, instead of *differ from*. Example: "I differ with the learned gentleman, entirely,"—which is intended to mean, that the speaker holds views different from those of the gentleman; not that he agrees with the gentleman in differing from the views of a third person. *Different to* is often spoken and written in England, and occasionally in this country, instead of *different from*. An example of this occurs in Queen Victoria's book, edited by Mr. Helps.

Corporeal, for corporal, is a gross vulgarism, the use of which at this day should almost subject an educated man to the kind of punishment which the latter adjective designates. *Corporeal* means, having a body corporal, or belonging to a body.

Wearies, for is wearied. Example: "The reader soon wearies of such stuff."

Any how is an exceedingly vulgar phrase, though used even by so elegant a writer as Blair. Example: "If the damage can be any how repaired," etc. The use of this expression, *in any manner*, by one who professes to write and speak the English tongue with purity, is unpardonable.

It were, for it is. Example: "It were a consummation devoutly to be wished for." Dr. Chalmers says: "It were an intolerable spectacle, even to the inmates of a felon's cell, did they behold one of their fellows in the agonies of death." For *were* put *would be*, and for *did* put *should*.

Doubt is a word much abused by a class of would-be laconic speakers, who affect an Abernethy-like brevity of language. "I doubt such is the true meaning of the

Constitution," say our "great expounders," looking wondrous wise. They mean, "I doubt whether," etc.

Lie, lay. Gross blunders are committed in the use of these words; *e. g.*, "He laid down on the grass," instead of "he laid himself down," or, "he lay down." The verb *to lie* (to be in a horizontal position) is *lay* in the preterite. The book does not *lay* on the table; it *lies* there. Some years ago an old lady consulted an eccentric Boston physician, and, in describing her disease, said: "The trouble, Doctor, is that I can neither lay nor set." "Then, Madam," was the reply, "I would respectfully suggest the propriety of roosting."

"*Like I did,*" is a gross Western and Southern vulgarism for "as I did." "You will feel like lightning ought to strike you," said a learned Doctor of Divinity at a meeting in the East. *Like* is a preposition, and should not be used as a conjunction.

Less, for fewer. "Not less than fifty persons." *Less* relates to quantity; *fewer*, to number.

Balance, for remainder. "I'll take the balance of the goods."

Revolt, for are revolting to. "Such doctrines revolt us."

Alone, for only. Quackenbos, in his "Course of Composition and Rhetoric," says, in violation of one of his own rules: "This means of communication, as well as that which follows, is employed by man alone." *Only* is often misplaced in a sentence. Miss Braddon says, in the prospectus of "Belgravia," her English magazine, that "it will be written in good English. In its pages papers of sterling merit will only appear." A poor beginning this! She means that "only papers of sterling merit will

appear." Bolingbroke says: "Believe me, the providence of God has established such an order in the world, that, of all that belongs to us, the least valuable parts can alone fall under the will of others." The last clause should be, "only the least valuable parts can fall under the will of others." The word *merely* is misplaced in the following sentence from a collegiate address on eloquence: "It is true of men as of God, that words merely meet no response,—only such as are loaded with thought."

Likewise, for also. *Also* classes together things or qualities, whilst *likewise* couples actions or states of being. "He did it likewise," means he did it in like manner. An English Quaker was once asked by a lawyer whether he could tell the difference between *also* and *likewise*. "O, yes," was the reply, "Erskine is a great lawyer; his talents are universally admired. You are a lawyer also, but not like-*wise*."

Avocation, for vocation, or calling. A man's *avocations* are those pursuits or amusements which engage his attention when he is "called away from" his regular business or profession,—as music, fishing, boating.

Crushed out, for crushed. "The rebellion has been crushed out." Why *out*, rather than *in?* If you tread on a worm, you simply crush him,—that is all. It ought to satisfy the most vengeful foe of "the rebels" that they have been crushed, without adding the needless cruelty of crushing them *in*, which is to be as vindictive as Alexander, of whom Dryden tells us that

> "Thrice he routed all his foes,
> And thrice he slew the slain."

Of, for from. Example: "Received of John Smith fifty dollars." Usage, perhaps, sanctions this.

At all is a needless expletive, which is employed by many writers of what may be called the forcible-feeble school. For example: "The coach was upset, but, strange to say, not a passenger received the slightest injury at all." "It is not at all strange."

But that, for that. This error is quite common among those who think themselves above learning anything more from the dictionary or grammar. Trench says: "He never doubts but that he knows their intention." A worse error is *but what*, as in the reply of Mr. Jobling, of Bleak House: "Thank you, Guppy, I don't know but what I will take a marrow pudding." "He would not believe but what I was joking."

Convene is used by many persons in a strange sense. "This road will convene the public."

Evidence is a word much abused by learned judges and attorneys,—being continually used for *testimony*. *Evidence* relates to the convictive view of any one's mind; *testimony*, to the knowledge of another concerning some fact. The evidence in a case is often the reverse of the testimony.

Had have. This is a very low vulgarism, notwithstanding it has the authority of Addison. It is quite common to say, "Had I have seen him," "Had you have known it," etc. We can say, "I have been," "I had been," but what sort of a tense is *had have* been?

Had ought, *had better*, *had rather*. All these expressions are absurdities, not less gross than *hisn*, *tother*, *baint*, *theirn*. No doubt there is plenty of good authority for *had better* and *had rather;* but how can future action be expressed by a verb that signifies past and completed possession?

At, for by. *E. g.*, "Sales at auction." The word auc-

tion signifies a *manner* of sale; and this signification seems to require the preposition *by*.

The above, as an adjective. "The above extract is sufficient to verify my assertion." "I fully concur in the above statement" (the statement above, or the foregoing statement). Charles Lamb speaks of "the above boys and the below boys."

Then, as an adjective. "The then king of Holland." This error, to which even educated men are addicted, springs from a desire of brevity; but verbal economy is not commendable when it violates the plainest rules of language.

Final completion. As every completion is final, the adjective is superfluous. Similar to this superabundant form of expression is another, in which *universal* and *all* are brought into the same construction. A man is said to be "universally esteemed by all who know him." If *all* esteem him, he is, of course, *universally* esteemed; and the converse is equally true.

Party, for man or woman. This error, so common in England, is becoming more and more prevalent here. An English witness once testified that he saw "a short party" (meaning person) "go over the bridge." Another Englishman, who had looked at a portrait of St. Paul in a gallery at Florence, being asked his opinion of the picture, said that he thought "the party was very well executed." It is hardly necessary to say that it takes several persons to make a party.

Celebrity is sometimes applied to celebrated persons, instead of being used abstractly, *e. g.*, "Several celebrities are at the Palmer House."

Equanimity of mind. As equanimity *(æquus animus)*

means evenness of mind, why should "of mind" be repeated; "Anxiety of mind" is less objectionable, but the first word is sufficient.

Don't, for doesn't, or does not. Even so scholarly a divine as the Rev. Dr. Bellows, of New York, employs this vulgarism four times in an article in the "Independent." "A man," he says, "who knows only his family and neighbors, don't know them; a man who only knows the present don't know that. . . . Many a man, with a talent for making money, don't know whether he is rich or poor, because he does not understand bookkeeping," etc.

Predicate, for found. *E. g.*, "His argument was predicated on the assumption," etc.

Try, for make. *E. g.*, "Try the experiment."

Superior, for able, virtuous, etc. *E. g.*, "He is a superior man." Not less vulgar is the expression, "an inferior man," for a man of small abilities.

Deceiving, for trying to deceive. *E. g.*, a person says to another, "You are deceiving me," when he means exactly the opposite, namely, "You are trying to deceive me, but you cannot succeed, for your trickery is transparent."

The masses, for the people generally. "The masses must be educated." The masses of what?

In our midst. This vulgarism is continually heard in prayer-meetings, and from the lips of Doctors of Divinity, though its incorrectness has been exposed again and again. The second chapter in Prof. Schele De Vere's excellent "Studies in English" begins thus: "When a man rises to eminence in our midst," etc.,—which is doubtless one of the few errors in his book *quas incuria fudit*. The possessive pronoun can properly be used only to indicate

possession or appurtenance. "The midst" of a company or society is not a thing belonging or appurtenant to the company, or to the individuals composing it. It is a mere term of relation of an adverbial, not of a substantive character, and is an intensified form of expression for *among*. Would any one say, "In our middle"?

Excessively, for exceedingly. Ladies often complain that the weather is "excessively hot," thereby implying that they do not object to the heat, but only to the excess of heat. They mean simply that the weather is *very* hot.

Either is applicable only to two objects; and the same remark is true of *neither* and *both*. "Either of the three" is wrong; so is this,—"Ten burglars broke into the house, but neither of them could be recognized." Say, "*none* of them," or "*not one* of them, could be recognized." *Either* is sometimes improperly used for *each; e. g.*, "On either side of the river was the tree of life,"—Rev. xxi. 2. Here it is not meant that, if you do not find that the tree of life was on *this* side, it was on *that;* but that the tree of life was on each side,—on this side, and on that. In Thomson's "Outlines of the Laws of Thought," page 53, we read: "The names we employ in speech . . . are symbols both to speaker and hearer, the full and exact meaning of which neither of them stop to unfold," etc. The proper use of *either* was vindicated some years ago in England, by the Court of Chancery. A certain testator left property, the disposition of which was affected by "the death of either" of two persons. One learned counsel contended that the word "either" meant both; in support of this view he quoted Richardson, Webster, Chaucer, Dryden, Southey, the history of the crucifixion, and a passage from the Revelation. The learned judge suggested that there was an

old song in the "Beggar's Opera," known to all, which took the opposite view:

"How happy could I be with either,
Were t'other dear charmer away."

In pronouncing judgment, the judge dissented entirely from the argument of the learned counsel. "Either," he said, "means one of two, and does not mean both." Though occasionally, by poets and some other writers, the word was employed to signify *both*, it did not in this case before the court.

Whether is a contraction of *which of either*, and therefore cannot be correctly applied to more than two objects.

Never, for ever. *E. g.*, "Charm he never so wisely"; "Let the offence be of never so high a nature." Many grammarians approve of this use of *never;* but its correctness, to say the least, is doubtful. In such sentences as these, "He was deaf to the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely," "Were it ever so fine a day, I would not go out," the word *ever* is an adverb of degree, and has nothing to do with time. "If I take ever so little of this drug, it will kill me," is equivalent to "however little," or "how little soever I take of this drug, it will kill me." Harrison well says on this point: "Let any one translate one of these phrases into another language, and he will find that ever presents itself as a term expressive of degree, and not of time at all. "Charm he ever so wisely": Quamvis incantandi sit *peritus*, ant *peritissimus.*

Seldom or never is a common vulgarism. Say, "seldom, if ever."

Sit, *sat*, are much abused words. It is said that the brilliant Irish lawyer, Curran, once carelessly observed in court, "an action lays," and the judge corrected him by

remarking, "Lies, Mr. Curran,—hens lay"; but subsequently the judge ordering a counsellor to "set down," Curran retaliated, "Sit down, your honor,—hens set." The retort was characterized by more wit than truth. Hens do not set; they sit. It is not unusual to hear persons say, "The coat sets well"; "The wind sets fair." *Sits* is the proper word. The preterite of *sit* is often incorrectly used for that of *set*; *e. g.*, "He sat off for Boston."

From thence, from whence. As the adverbs *thence* and *whence* literally supply the place of a noun and preposition, there is a solecism in employing a preposition in conjunction with them.

Conduct. In conversation, this verb is frequently used without the personal pronoun; as, "he conducts well," for "he conducts himself well."

Least, for less. "Of two evils, choose the least."

A confirmed invalid. Can weakness be strong? If not, how can a man be a *confirmed*, or strengthened, invalid?

Proposition, for proposal. This is not a solecism, but, as a univocal word is preferable to one that is equivocal, *proposal*, for a thing offered or proposed, is better than *proposition.* Strictly, a proposal is something offered to be done; a proposition is something submitted to one's consideration. *E. g.*, "He rejected the proposal of his friend;" "he demonstrated the fifth proposition in Euclid."

Previous, for previously. "Previous to my leaving America."

Appreciates, for rises in value. "Gold appreciated yesterday."

Proven for proved, and *plead* for pleaded, are clearly vulgarisms.

Bound, for ready or determined. "I am bound to do it." We may say properly that a ship is "bound to Liverpool"; but in that case we do not employ, as many suppose, the past participle of the verb *to bind*, but the old northern participial adjective, *buinn*, from the verb, *at bua*, signifying "to make ready, or prepare." The term is strictly a nautical one, and to employ it in a sense that unites the significations both of *buinn* and the English participle *bound* from *bind*, is a plain abuse of language.

No, for not. *E. g.*, "Whether I am there or no." Cowper writes:

> "I will not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau
> Whether birds confabulate or no."

By supplying the ellipsis, we shall see that *not* is here the proper word. "Whether birds confabulate, or do not confabulate"; "whether I am there, or not there." *No* never properly qualifies a verb.

Such for so. *E. g.*, "I never saw such a high spire." This means, "I never saw a high spire of such a form," or "of such architecture"; whereas the speaker, in all probability, means only that he never saw *so* high a spire.

Incorrect orthography. Orthography means "correct writing, or spelling." "Incorrect orthography" is, therefore, equivalent to "incorrect correct writing."

How for that. "I have heard *how* some critics have been pacified with claret and a supper."

Directly, for as soon as. "Directly he came, I went away with him."

Equally as well, for equally well. *E. g.*, "It will do equally as well."

Looks beautifully. In spite of the frequency with which this impropriety has been censured, one hears it almost daily from the lips of educated men and women. The error arises from confounding *look* in the sense of to direct the eye, and look in the sense of to seem, to appear. In English, many verbs take an adjective with them to form the predicate, where in other languages an adverb would be used; *e. g.*, "he fell ill"; "he feels cold"; "her smiles amid the blushes lovelier show." No cultivated person would say, "she is beautifully," or "she seems beautifully," yet these phrases are no more improper than "she looks beautifully." We qualify what a person does by an adverb; what a person *is*, or *seems to be*, by an adjective; *e. g.*, "she looks coldly on him"; "she looks cold."

Leave, as an intransitive verb. *E. g.*, "He left yesterday." Many persons who use this phrase are misled by what they deem the analogous expressions, *to write*, *to read.* These verbs express an occupation, as truly as *to run*, *to walk*, *to stand.* In answer to the question, "What is A. B. doing?" it is sufficient to say, "He is reading." Here a complete idea is conveyed, which is not true of the phrase, "He left yesterday."

Myself, for I. *E. g.*, "Mrs. Jones and myself will be happy to dine with you"; "Prof. S. and myself have examined the work." The proper use of *myself* is either as a reflective pronoun, or for the sake of distinction and emphasis; as when Juliet cries, "Romeo, doff thy name, and for that name, which is no part of thee, take all myself"; or in Milton's paradisiacal hymn: "These are thy glorious works, Parent of Good, Almighty! thine this

universal frame thus wondrous fair! Thyself how wondrous then!"

Restive. This word, which means *inclined to rest, obstinate, unwilling to go*, is employed, almost constantly, in a sense directly the reverse of this; that is, for uneasy, restless.

Quantity, for number. *E. g.*, "A quantity of books"; "a quantity of postage stamps." In speaking of a collection or mass, it is proper to use *quantity;* but in speaking of individual objects, however many, we must use the word number. "A quantity of meat" or "a quantity of iron" is good English, but not "a quantity of bank-notes." We may say "a quantity of wood," but we should say "a number of sticks."

Carnival. This word literally means "a farewell to meat," or, as some etymologists think, "flesh, be strong!" In Catholic countries it signifies a festival celebrated with merriment and revelry during the week before Lent. In this country, especially in newspaper use, it is employed in the sense of fun, frolic, spree, festival; and that so universally as almost to have banished some of these words from the language. If many persons are skating, that is a carnival; so, if they take a sleigh-ride, or if there is a rush to Long Branch in the summer. As we have a plenty of legitimate words to describe these festivities, the use of this outlandish term has not a shadow of justification.

All of them. As *of* here means *out of*, corresponding with the Latin preposition *e*, or *ex*, it cannot be correct to say *all of them.* We may say, "take one of them" or "take two of them," or "take them all"; but the phrase we are criticising is wholly unjustifiable.

To allude. Among the improprieties of speech which

even those sharp-eyed literary detectives, Alford, Moon, and Gould have failed to pounce upon and pillory, are the misuses of the word that heads this article. Once the verb had a distinct, well-defined meaning, but it is now rapidly losing its true signification. *To allude* to a thing, — what is it? Is it not to speak of it *darkly*,— to *hint* at it playfully (from *ludo*, *ludere*,— to play), without any direct mention? Yet the word is used in a sense directly opposite to this. Suppose you lose in the street some package, and advertise its loss in the newspapers. The person who finds the package is sure to reply to your advertisement by speaking of "the package you alluded to in your advertisement," though you have alluded to nothing, but have told your story in the most distinct and straightforward manner possible, without an approximation to a hint or innuendo. Newspaper reporters, by their abuse of this unhappy word, will transform a bold and daring speech in Congress, in which a senator has taken some bull by the horns,— in other words, dealt openly and manfully with the subject discussed,— into a heap of dark and mysterious innuendoes. The honorable gentleman *alluded to* the currency — to the war — to Andrew Johnson — to the New Orleans massacre; he *alluded to* the sympathizers with the South, though he denounced them in the most caustic terms; he *alluded to* the tax-bill, and he *alluded to* fifty other things, about every one of which he spoke out his mind in emphatic and unequivocal terms. An English journal tells a ludicrous story of an M. P. who, his health having been drunk by name, rose on his legs, and spoke of "the flattering way in which he had been alluded to." Another public speaker spoke of a book which had been *alluded to* by name. But the climax of absurdity in the

use of this word was attained by an Irish M.P., who wrote a life of an Italian poet. Quoting Byron's lines about "the fatal gift of beauty," he then goes on to talk about "the fatal gift which has been already alluded to!"

Either alternative. E. g., "You may take either alternative." "Two alternatives were presented to me." *Alternative* evidently means a choice,—one choice,—between two things. If there be only one offered, we say there is *no alternative. Two alternatives* is, therefore, a palpable contradiction in terms; yet some speakers talk of "several alternatives" having been presented to them.

Whole, for all. The "Spectator" says: "The Red-Cross Knight runs through the whole steps of the Christian life." Alison, who is one of the loosest writers in our literature, declares, in his "History of the French Revolution," that "the whole Russians are inspired with the belief that their mission is to conquer the world." This can only mean that those Russians who are entire,—who have not lost a leg, an arm, or some other part of the body,—are inspired with the belief of which he speaks. *Whole* refers to the component parts of a single body, and is therefore singular in meaning.

Jeopardize. There is considerable authority for this word, which is beginning to supplant the good old English word *jeopard.* But why is it more needed than *perilize, hazardize?*

Preventative, for preventive; *conversationalist*, for converser; *underhanded*, for underhand; *casuality*, for casualty; *speciality*, for specialty; *leniency*, for lenity; *firstly*, for first; are all base coinages,—barbarisms which should be excommunicated by "bell, book, and candle."

Dangerous, for in danger. A leading Boston paper says

of a deceased minister: "His illness was only of a week's duration, and was pleurisy and rheumatism. He was not supposed to be dangerous."

Nice. One of the most offensive barbarisms now prevalent, is the use of this as a pet word to express almost every kind of approbation, and almost every quality. Strictly, *nice* can be used only in a subjective, not in an objective, sense; though both of our leading lexicographers approve of such expressions as "a nice bit of cheese." Of the vulgarity of such expressions as "a nice man" (meaning a good or pleasing man), "a nice day," "a nice party," etc., there cannot be a shadow of doubt. "A nice man" means a fastidious man; a "nice letter" is a letter very delicate in its language. Some persons are more nice than wise. Archdeacon Hare complains that "this characterless domino," as he stigmatizes the word *nice*, is continually used by his countrymen, and that "a universal deluge of *niaserie* (for the word was originally *niais*) threatens to whelm the whole island." The Latin word *elegans* seems to have had a similar history; being derived from *elego*, and meaning primarily *nice* or *choice*, and subsequently *elegant*.

Mutual, for common, or reciprocal. Dean Alford justly protests against the stereotyped vulgarism, "a mutual friend." Mutual is applicable to sentiments and acts, but not to persons. Two friends may have a mutual love, but for either to speak of a third person as being "their mutual friend," is sheer nonsense. Yet Dickens entitled one of his novels, "Our Mutual Friend."

Stopping, for staying. "The Hon. John Jones is stopping at the Sherman House." In reading such a statement as this, we are tempted to ask, When will Mr. Jones stop stopping? A man may stop a dozen times at a place, or on

a journey, but he cannot *continue* stopping. One may stop at a hotel without becoming a guest. The true meaning of the word *stop* was well understood by the man who did not invite his professed friend to visit him: "If you come, at any time, within ten miles of my house, just stop."

Trifling minutiae. Archbishop Whately, in his "Rhetoric," speaks of "trifling minutiae of style." In like manner, Henry Kirke White speaks of his poems as being "the juvenile efforts of a youth," and Disraeli, the author of "The Curiosities of Literature," speaks of "the battles of logomachy," and of "the mysteries of the arcana of alchemy." The first of these phrases may be less palpably tautological than the other three; yet as *minutiae* means nearly the same thing as *trifles*, a careful writer would be as averse to using such an expression as Whately's, as he would to talking, like Sir Archibald Alison, of representative institutions as having been "reëstablished in our time by the influence of English *Anglo*mania."

Indices, for indexes. "We have examined our indices," etc., say the Chicago abstract-makers. *Indices* are algebraic signs; tables of contents are indexes.

Rendition, for rendering. *E. g.*, "Mr. Booth's rendition of Hamlet was admirable." *Rendition* means surrender, giving up, relinquishing to another; as when we speak of the rendition of a beleaguered town to the besieger, or of a pledge upon the satisfaction of a debt.

Extend, for give. Lecture committees, instead of simply inviting a public speaker, or giving him an invitation, almost universally *extend* an invitation; perhaps, because he is generally at a considerable distance. Richard Grant White says pertinently: "As extend (from *ex* and *tendo*) means merely to stretch forth, it is much better to say that

a man put out, offered, or stretched forth his hand than that he extended it. Shakspeare makes the pompous, pragmatical *Malvolio* say: 'I extend my hand to him thus': but Paul 'stretched forth the hand and answered for himself.' This, however, is a question of taste, not of correctness."

Except, for unless. *E. g.*, "No one, except he has served an apprenticeship, need apply." The former word is a preposition, and must be followed by a noun or pronoun, and not by a proposition.

Couple, for pair or brace. When two persons or things are joined or linked together, they form a *couple*. The number of things that can be coupled, is comparatively small, yet the expression is in constant use; as, "a couple of books," "a couple of partridges," "a couple of weeks," etc. One might as well speak of "a pair of dollars."

Every. *E. g.*, "I have every confidence in him"; "they rendered me every assistance." *Every* denotes all the individuals of a number greater than two, separately considered. Derived from the Anglo-Saxon, *æfer*, ever, *ælc*, each, it means each of all, not all in mass. By "every confidence" is meant simply perfect confidence; by "every assistance," all possible assistance.

Almost, as an adjective. Prof. Whitney, in his able work on "Language, and the Study of Language," speaks of "the almost universality of instruction among us."

Condign. *E. g.*, "He does not deserve the condign punishment he has received." As the meaning of *condign* is that which is deserved, we have here a contradiction in terms, the statement being equivalent to this: "He does not deserve the deserved punishment he has received."

Paraphernalia. This is a big, sounding word from the

Greek, which some newspaper writers are constantly misusing. It is strictly a law-term, and means whatever the wife brings with her at marriage in addition to her dower. Her dress and her ornaments are *paraphernalia*. To apply the term to an Irishman's sash on St. Patrick's day, or to a Freemason's hieroglyphic apron, it has been justly said, is not only an abuse of language, but a clear invasion of woman's rights.

Setting-room, for sitting-room, is a gross vulgarism, which is quite common, even with those who deem themselves *nice* people. "I saw your children in the setting-room as I went past," said a well-dressed woman in our hearing, in a horse-car. How *could* she go *past?* It is not difficult to go *by* any object; but to *go past* is a contradiction in terms.

An innumerable number is an absurd expression, which is used by some persons,—not, it is to be hoped, "an innumerable number" of times.

Seraphim, for seraph; the plural for the singular. Even Addison says: "The zeal of the seraphim breaks forth," etc. This is as ludicrous as the language of the Indiana justice, who spoke of "the first claw of the statute," or the answer of the man who, when asked whether he had no politics, replied, "Not a single politic."

People, for persons. "Many people think so." Better, persons; people means a body of persons regarded collectively, a nation.

Off of, for off. "Cut a yard off of the cloth."

More perfect, most perfect. What shall be said of these and similar forms of expression? Doubtless they should be discouraged, though used by Shakspeare and Milton. It may be argued in their favor, that, though not logically

correct, yet they are rhetorically so. It is true that, as "twenty lions cannot be more twenty than twenty flies," so nothing can be more perfect than perfection. But we do not object to say that one man is *braver* than another, or *wiser*, though, if we had an absolute standard of bravery or wisdom,—that is, a clear idea of them,—we should pronounce either of the two persons to be simply brave or not brave, wise or not wise. We say that Smith is a *better* man than Jones, though no one is absolutely good but God. These forms are used because language is inadequate to express the intensity of the thought,—as in Milton's "most wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best," or the lines

> "And *in the lowest deep a lower deep*,
> Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,
> To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven."

Milton abounds in these illogical expressions, as do the best Greek poets; and one of the happiest verses in the poems of W. W. Story is a similar intentional contradiction, as

> "Of every noble work the silent part is best;
> Of all expression, that which cannot be expressed."

Ugly, for ill-tempered. A leading New York divine is reported as saying of an ill-tempered child, that "he wants all he sees, and screams if he does not get it; ugly as he can be, no matter who is disturbed by it."

Is, for are. One of the most frequent blemishes in English prose is the indiscriminate use of singulars and plurals. *E. g.*, Junius writes: "Both minister and magistrate is compelled to choose between his duty and his reputation." Even Lindley Murray writes: "Their general scope and tendency is not remembered at all"; and Milton sings:

> "For their mind and spirit remains invincible."

Some grammarians defend these forms of expression on the ground that when two or more nouns singular represent a *single* idea, the verb to which they are the nominative may be put in the singular. The answer to this is, that if the nouns express the *same* idea, one of them is superfluous; if *different* ideas, then they form a plural, and the verb should be plural also. Another quibble employed to justify such expressions, is that the verb, which is expressed after the last noun, is considered as understood *after* the first. But we are not told how this process of subaudition can go on in the mind of the reader, *before* he knows what the verb is to be; and while ellipsis not only is in many cases permissible, but gives conciseness and energy to style, yet there is a limit beyond which it cannot be pushed without leading to literary anarchy.

Caption, for heading. *E. g.*, "The caption of this newspaper article." *Caption* means that part of a legal instrument which shows where, when, and by what authority it was taken, found, or executed.

To extremely maltreat. This phrase from Trench is an example of a very common solecism. *To*, the sign of the infinitive, should never be separated from the verb. Say, "to maltreat extremely," or "extremely to maltreat."

Accord, for grant. "He accorded them (or to them) all they asked for." *To accord with*, means properly to agree or to suit; as, "He accorded with my views."

Enthuse, a word used by some clergymen, is not to be found either in Worcester's Dictionary or in Webster's "Unabridged."

Personalty. This word is supposed by some persons to mean articles worn on one's person. Some years ago, a lady, in England, who had made this mistake, and

who wished to leave to her servant her clothing, jewels, etc., described them as her *personalty*, and unwittingly included in her bequest ten thousand pounds.

Do. This verb is often used incorrectly as a substitute for other verbs; as, "I did not say, as some have done." We may properly say, "I did not say, as some do" (*say*), for here the ellipsis of the preceding verb may be supplied.

On to, for on, or upon. "He got on to an omnibus;" "He jumped on to a chair." The preposition *to* is superfluous. Say, "He got upon an omnibus," etc. Some persons speak of "continuing on," which is as objectionable as "He went to Boston for to see the city."

Older, for elder. *Older* is properly applied to objects, animate and inanimate; *elder*, to rational beings.

Overflown, for overflowed. "The river has overflown." *Flowed* is the participle of "to flow"; *flown*, of "to fly."

Spoonsful, for spoonfuls, and *effluvia* for effluvium, are very common errors. "A disagreeable effluvia" is as gross a mistake as "an inexplicable phenomena."

Scarcely, for hardly. *Scarcely* pertains to quantity; *hardly*, to degree; as, "There is scarcely a bushel"; "I shall hardly finish my job by night-fall."

Fare thee well, which has Byron's authority, is plainly wrong.

Community, for the community; as, "Community will not submit to such outrages." Prof. Marsh has justly censured this vulgarism. Who would think of saying, "Public is interested in this question"? When we *personify* common nouns used definitely in the singular number, we may omit the article, as when we speak of the doings of Parliament, or of Holy Church. "During

the Revolution," says Professor M., "while the federal government was a body of doubtful authority and permanence, . . . the phrase used was always '*the* Congress,' and such is the form of expression in the Constitution itself. But when the Government became consolidated, and Congress was recognized as the paramount legislative power of the Union, . . . it was personified, and the article dropped, and, in like manner, the word Government is often used in the same way."

Folks, for folk. As *folk* implies plurality, the *s* is needless.

Mussulmen. Mussulman is not a compound of man, and, therefore, like *German*, it forms its plural by adding *s*.

Drive, for ride. A lady says that "she is going to drive in the park," when she intends that her servant shall drive (not her, but) the horses.

Try and, for try to. *E. g.*, "Try and do it."

Whole, *entire*, *complete*, and *total*, are words which are used almost indiscriminately by many persons. That is *whole*, from which nothing has been taken; that is *entire*, which has not been divided; that is *complete*, which has all its parts. *Total* refers to the aggregate of the parts. Thus we say, a *whole* loaf of bread; an *entire* set of spoons; a *complete* harness; the *total* cost or expense.

Succeed, for give success to, or cause to succeed. *E. g.*, "If Providence succeed us in this work." Both Webster and Worcester justify this use of *succeed* as a transitive verb; but if not now grammatically objectionable, as formerly, it is still to be avoided on the ground of ambiguity. In the phrase quoted, *succeed* may mean either cause to succeed, or follow.

Two good ones. "Among all the apples there were but two good ones." Two *ones?*

Raising the rent, for increasing the rent. A landlord notified his tenant that he should raise his rent. "Thank you," was the reply; "I find it very hard to raise it myself."

Was, for is. "Two young men," says Swift, "have made a discovery, that there was a God." That there *was* a God? When? This year, or last year, or ages ago? All general truths should be expressed by the use of verbs in the present tense.

Shall and *will.* There are, perhaps, no two words in the language which are more frequently confounded or used inaccurately, than *shall* and *will.* Certain it is, that of all the rocks on which foreigners split in the use of the Queen's English, there is none which so puzzles and perplexes them as the distinction between these little words. Originally both words were employed for the same purpose in other languages of the same stock with ours; but their use has been worked out by the descendants of the Anglo-Saxons, until it has attained a degree of nicety remarkable in itself, and by no means easy of acquisition even by the subjects of Victoria or by Americans. Every one has heard of the Dutchman who, on falling into a river, cried out, "I will drown, and nobody shall help me." The Irish are perpetually using *shall* for *will*, while the Scotch use of *will* for *shall* is equally inveterate and universal. Dr. Chalmers says: "I am not able to devote as much time and attention to other subjects as I will be under the necessity of doing next winter." The use of *shall* for *will*, in the following passage, has led some critics strongly to suspect that the author of the anonymous work, "Vestiges

of Creation," is a Scotchman: "I do not expect that any word of praise which this work may elicit shall ever be responded to by me; or that any word of censure shall ever be parried or deprecated." This awkward use of *shall*, we have seen, is not a Scotticism; yet it is curious to see how a writer who pertinaciously shrouds himself in mystery, may be detected by the blundering use of a monosyllable. So the use of the possessive neuter pronoun *its* in the poems which Chatterton wrote and palmed off as the productions of one Rowlie, a monk in the fifteenth century, betrayed the forgery,— inasmuch as that little monosyllable, *its*, now so common and convenient, did not find its way into the language till about the time of Shakspeare. Milton never once uses it, nor, except as a misprint, is it to be found anywhere in the Bible.

Gilfillan, a Scotch writer, thus uses *will* for shall: "If we look within the rough and awkward outside, we will be richly rewarded by its perusal." So Alison, the historian: "We know to what causes our past reverses have been owing, and we will have ourselves to blame if they are again incurred." Macaulay observes that "not one Londoner in a thousand ever misplaces his *will* and *shall*. Doctor Robinson could, undoubtedly, have written a luminous dissertation on the use of those words. Yet, even in his latest work, he sometimes misplaced them ludicrously." But Dr. Johnson was a Londoner, and he did not always use his *shalls* and *wills* correctly, as will be seen by the following extract from a letter to Boswell in 1774: "You must make haste and gather me all you can, and do it quickly, or I *will* and *shall* do without it." In this anticlimax Johnson meant to emphasize the latter of the auxiliaries. But *shall* (Saxon, *sceal*=*necesse est*,) in the first

person, simply foretells; as, "I shall go to New York to-morrow." On the other hand, *will*, in the first person, not only foretells, but promises, or declares the resolution to do a thing; as, "I will pay you what I owe you." The Doctor should have said: "I shall and will do without it," putting the strongest term last. The confusion of the two words is steadily increasing in this country. Formerly the only Americans who confounded them were Southerners; now, the misuse of the words is stealing through the North. *E. g.*, "I will go to town to-morrow, and shall take an early opportunity of calling on your friend there." "We will never look on his like again." A writer in a New York paper says: "None of our coal mines are deep, but the time is coming when we will have to dig deeper in search of both coal and metallic ores." Again: we hear persons speak thus: "Let us keep a sharp look-out, and we will avoid all danger."

Shakspeare rarely confounded the two words; for example, in "Coriolanus":

> "*Cor.* Shall remain!
> Hear you this Triton of the minnows? mark you
> His absolute *shall*?"

Again, in Antony and Cleopatra:

> "*Meno.* Wilt thou be lord of the whole world?
> *Senator.* He shall to the market-place."

Wordsworth, too, who is one of the most accurate writers in our literature, nicely discriminates in his use of *shall* and *will:*

> "This child I to myself will take;
> She shall be mine, and I will make
> A lady of my own.
>
> The stars of midnight shall be dear
> To her; and she shall lean her ear
> In many a secret place

Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face."

In the last passage determination is expressed, and therefore *shall* is properly used.

When the Bible was translated, the language was in a state of transition; hence we read in Kings ii.: "Ahab shall slay me," for *will*. In Genesis xliii. 3–5, the two words are nicely discriminated.

The general rule to be followed in the use of the two words is, that when the simple idea of future occurrence is to be expressed, unconnected with the speaker's resolve, we must use *shall* in the first person, and *will* in the second and third; as, "I shall die, you will die, he will die"; but when the idea of compulsion or necessity is to be conveyed,—a futurity connected with the will of the speaker,—*will* must be employed in the first person, and *shall* in the second and third; as, "I will go, you shall go, he shall go." "I shall attain to thirty at my next birthday" merely foretells the age to which the speaker will have reached at his next birthday; "I will attain to thirty at my next birthday" would imply a determination to be so old at the time mentioned. "You shall have some money to-morrow" would imply a promise to pay it: "you will have some money to-morrow" would only imply an expectation that the person addressed would receive some money.

Similar to the misuse of *shall* and *will*, is that of *would* for should; as, "You promised that it would be done": "But for reinforcements we would have been beaten." Mr. Brace, in his work on Hungary, makes the people of that country say of Kossuth: "He ought to have known that we

would be ruined,"—which can only mean "we wished to be ruined."

The importance of attending to the distinction of *shall* and *will*, and to the nice distinctions of words generally, is strikingly illustrated by an incident in Massachusetts. In 1844, Abner Rogers was tried in that State for the murder of the warden of the penitentiary. The man who had been sent to search the prisoner, said in evidence: "He (Rogers) said, 'I have fixed the warden, and I'll have a rope round my neck.' On the strength of what he said, I took his suspenders from him." Being cross-examined, the witness said his words were: "I will have a rope," not "I shall have a rope." The counsel against the prisoner argued that he declared an intention of suicide, to escape from the penalty of the law, which he knew he had incurred. On the other hand, *shall* would, no doubt, have been regarded as a betrayal of his consciousness of having incurred a felon's doom. The prisoner was acquitted on the ground of insanity. Strange that the fate of an alleged murderer should turn upon the question which he used of two little words that are so frequently confounded, and employed one for the other! It would be difficult to conceive of a more pregnant comment on the importance of using words with discrimination and accuracy.

It would be impossible, in the limits to which we are restricted, to give all the nice distinctions to be observed in the use of *shall* and *will*. For a full explanation of the subject we must refer the unlearned reader to the various English grammars, and such works as Sir E. W. Head's treatise on the two words, and the works on Synonymes by Graham, Crabb, and Whately. Prof. Schele DeVere, in his late "Studies in Language," expresses the opinion

that this double future is a great beauty of the English language, but that it is impossible to give any rule for its use, which will cover all cases, and that the only sure guide is "that instinct which is given to all who learn a language with their mother's milk, or who acquire it so successfully as to master its spirit as well as its form." His use of *will* for *shall*, in this very work, verifies the latter part of this statement, and shows that a foreigner may have a profound knowledge of the genius and constitution of a language, and yet be sorely puzzled by its niceties and subtleties. "If we go back," he says, "for the purpose of thus tracing the history of nouns to the oldest forms of English, we will there find the method of forming them from the first and simplest elements" (page 140). The "Edinburgh Review" denounces the distinction of *shall* and *will*, by their neglect of which the Scotch are so often bewrayed, as one of the most capricious and inconsistent of all imaginable irregularities, and as at variance not less with original etymology than with former usage. Prof. Marsh regards it as a verbal quibble, which will soon disappear from our language. It is a quibble just as any distinction is a quibble to persons who are too dull, too lazy, or too careless to apprehend it. With as much propriety might the distinction between the indicative and subjunctive forms of the verb, or the distinction between *farther* and *further*, *strong* and *robust*, *empty* and *vacant*, be pronounced a verbal quibble. Sir Edmund W. Head has shown that the difference is not one which has an existence only in the pedagogue's brain, but that it is as real and legitimate as that between *be* and *am*, and dates back as far as Wickliffe and Chaucer, while it has also the authority of Shakspeare.

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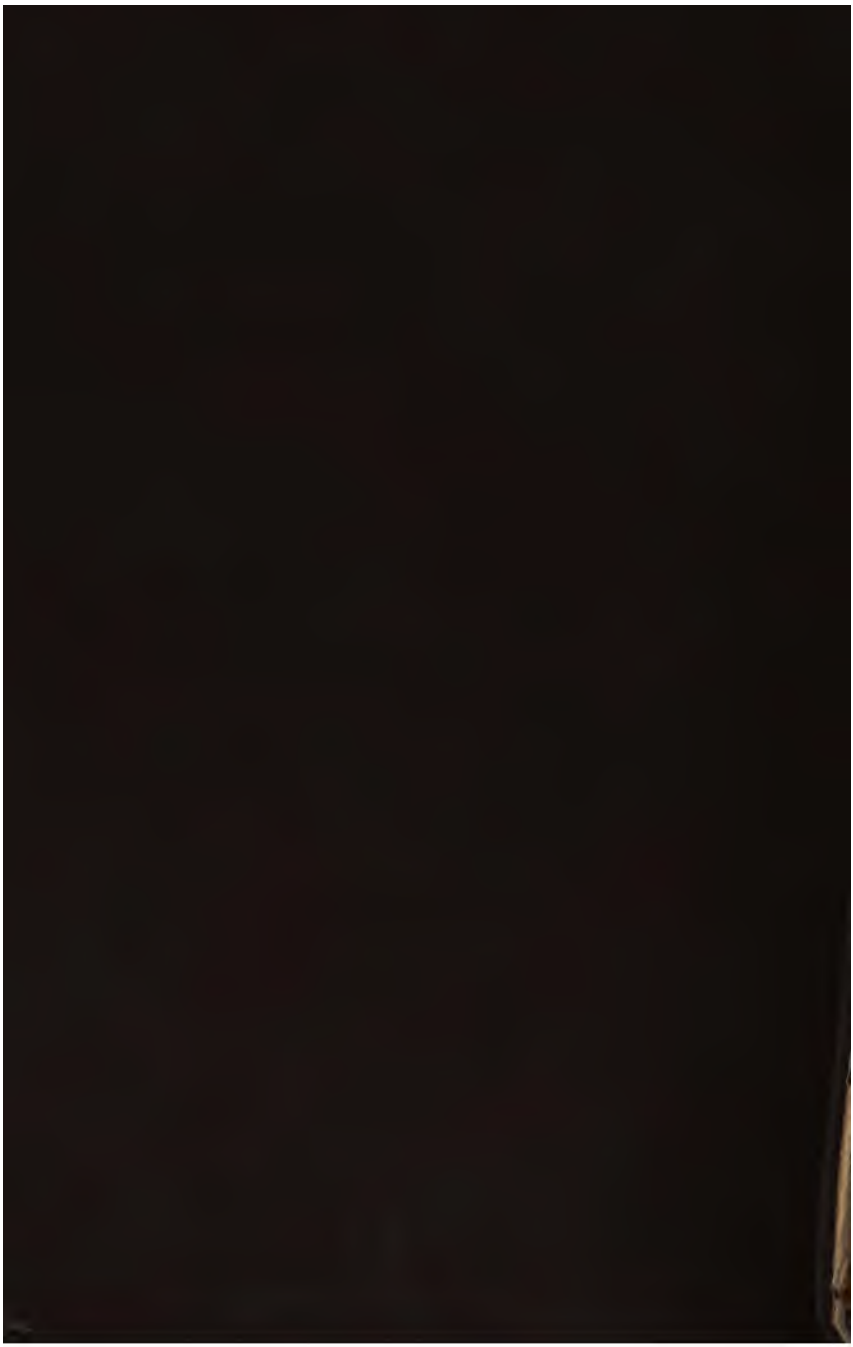

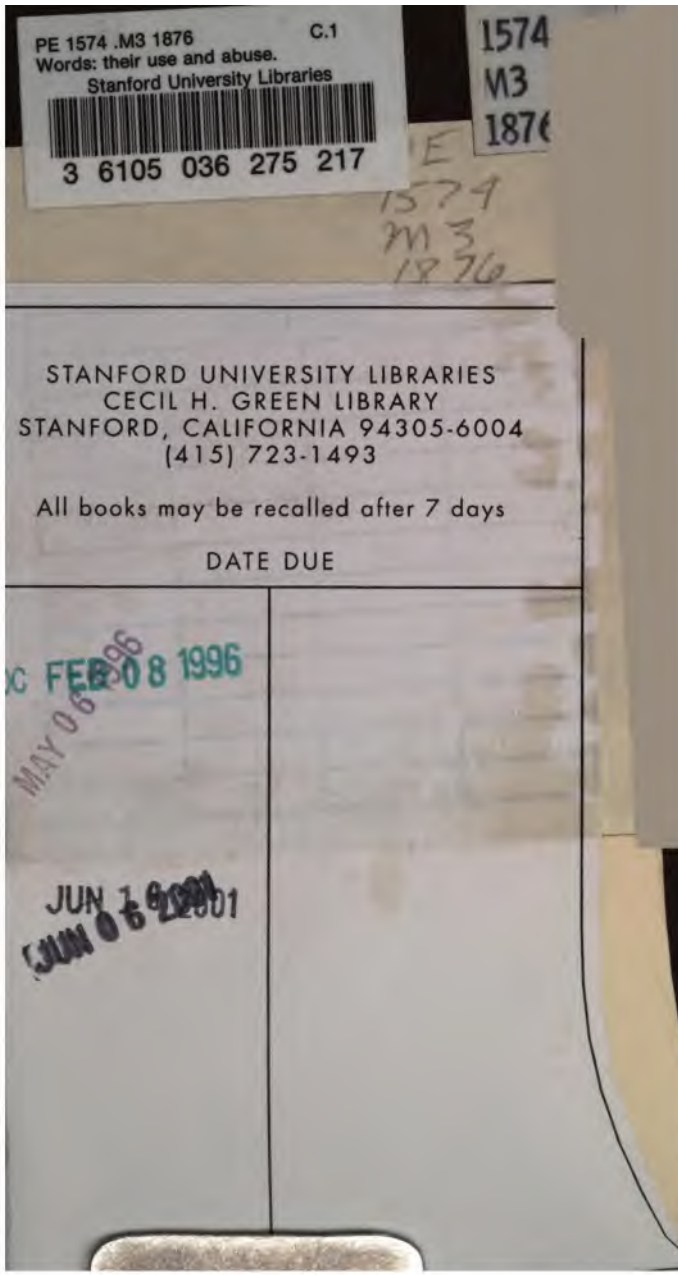
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